300 kg of shabu worth ₱600M seized in Bulacan

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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ALL SMOOCH up: Climbing on FPJ's hood shows his's going through a bruising campaign. Phil Dickens Indpx.

READ all about it: K-9-4 Senate nominee Rodolfo Biazon denounces what he calls Roco's "P30-M bloc" and warns he can very well throw "bigger" mud back at him. He plans to sue Roco.

CAN'T get one better than this for politicians—a stump on horseback, away from the madding crowd, windblown to a wide-open field of grass framed by one of the country's natural wonders. Mayon Volcano. And it happened to presidential aspirant Raul Roco and his running mate Herminio Aquino as their campaign motorcade drives through Guinobatan, Albay, on Thursday.

Biazon calls Roco a liar

SC seeks legal eagles' aid on FPJ citizenship

By Philip C. Tubeza and Christine O. Avendaño

THE SUPREME Court has appointed four friends of the court to help it decide on the disqualification petitions against opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

In a two-page en banc resolution, the tribunal named retired Supreme Court Justice Florenz Regalado, former UNO Constitutional Commission member Fr. Joaquin Bernas S.J., Ateneo University of the Philippines College of Law Dean Merlin Magallona, and UP law professor Raul Pangalangan as friends of the court.

The court has set the oral arguments on the case at 2 p.m. on Thursday.

It also consolidated the three different petitions of lawyers Victorino Fornier, Maria Jeanette Tecson, Felix Desiderio, and Zoilo Velez for the tribunal to disqualify Poe because he is allegedly not a natural-born Filipino citizen.

But Poe's lawyer Estelito Mendoza said Wednesday that the Supreme Court could base the disqualification cases against Poe on a new ruling after the elections.

He said that under Section 4, Article

A JAMMED-UP Biazon Coliseum roars in approval at the launching on Wednesday night of the presidential bid of Christian fundamentalist Eddie Villanueva, who hints he intends for running their campaign into entertainment.

Lacson says 2 potential veeps asked for millions

By Christine O. Avendaño, Michael Lim Ubac and Norman Bordadora

NOTHING but "30 million lies coming from the camp of Raul Roco."

This was the response of reelectionist Sen. Rodolfo Biazon to the claim of Roco, standard-bearer of Alyansa ng Pag-asa, that he left Pag-asa after receiving an offer of P30 million from the administration K-4 coalition.

"Whoever said that, I'm calling them liars," Biazon, a retiredmilitary candidate of K-4, said yesterday at a news conference in the Senate.

Other candidates like Sen. Nikki de Castro were also reported to have received money from the administration. Sr. Carlos, however, denied receiving P750 million in exchange for his withdrawal in favor of President Macapagal-Arroyo's effort to be her running mate. He also denied reports that he deposited the money in a bank account in Hong Kong.

But opposition presidential candidate

Bro. Eddie sees a 'born-again' RP

By Blanche S. Rivera

EDDIE VILLANUEVA launched his "strategic non-traditional" campaign for the presidential race on Wednesday night at the Araneta Coliseum in Quezon City in what appeared to be a revival festival for a righteous government.

A strange mix of "born-again" Christians from Luzon, Visayas from the Mindanao Village in Tagaig City and Catholics from Couples for Christ filled the coliseum to the rafters. Outside, people camped in the parking lot. Organizers estimated the crowd at 20,000.

Villanueva, standard-bearer of the fledgling political party Bangon Pilipinas Movement, Reverend Eliseo Soriano (Bangon), expressed confidence that the passion of Filipinos for change would win over the blinding resources, moral and unholy morals being peddled by his rivals.

With his campaign starting a day late than the other five presidential candidates, Villanueva took pointers at the premiere of movie stars and traditional politicians in the campaign center of his rivals.

GMA rivals cite links of 2 new poll execs to Mike A

By Marlo P. Morfi and Michael Lim Ubac

SOME candidates of President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday lambasted her for the appointment of two election commissioners with known close links to First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, hinting that they were chosen to help her win the May 10 polls.

Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos yesterday tasked Commissioners-designate Virgilio Garcillano and Manuel Barrientos to oversee the polls in Regions V, 10 and 12 and Region 11 and the Caraga region, respectively, amid calls to take back their appointments.

"There will also be a reassignment of the working commissioners, aside from the new regional assignments which would

Erap twits Ping over show biz

By Bernard M. Nieves

THERE'S NO business like show business, especially during a political campaign period in the Philippines.

Ousted President Joseph Estrada, a veteran of both show biz and politics, yesterday analyzed the current crisis as though in pantomime he knows exactly how it goes.

That is to say, the truth behind the "givens" which underlie, for instance, the fact that election time is the most lucrative for entertainers, and when managers have a standard contract for bookings during this period.

Estrada, a very popular and real-

PUNDITS' VIEW

RP needs to change politics of personalities

By Michelle V. Ramos Inquirer

A SECTORY by actor Fernando Poe Jr. in the May 10 presidential election need not lead to the country's economic ruin or to many investors' fear, according to economic and political experts who spoke at yesterday's forum, "Economic and Political Prospects for Election Year 2004."

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas S.J., executive director of Ateneo's Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, said the country's economic prospects would depend on a "large extent on Poe's economic team and how much say its nominees would have in crafting and implementing government policies."

"If the team being brought together will have much influence on governance, then we might have something economic and political scenario that is not too far from what we have right now," he said.

OF DOVES and eagles: The icon of the peaceful cousin of Sitio Limawa' President Cory Aquino, pitches in to save the Philippine Eagle by donating her own work for auction.

Cory donates her painting for eagles to fly

By Nelo Cuaresma

FROM PEOPLE Power icon who lived many a white dove signifying unreleased peace and democracy, former President Corazon Aquino is now inviting hand to save the Philippine eagle.

Aquino, who has dabbled in oil paintings since 1986, donated one of her pieces to the Philippine Eagle Foundation, which will contribute it auctioned to raise funds for the propagation of the endangered raptor.

She handed over "Lolos, Colors Everywhere" to PEF officials in simple ceremonies at

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

FPJ rebuffed in GMA country

By Carlito Pablo

LUBAO, Pampanga—Popular movie star Fernando Poe Jr. yesterday brought his challenge to the presidency of Malacañang to the very heartland of not only one but two Macapagal presidentiables.

For his daring, Poe was reminded in no uncertain terms that Lubao, if not all of Pampanga, was not about to let down its favorite daughter, President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Lubao is the birthplace of the late President Diosdado Macapagal whose mother and siblings overcame no inquiry the daughter who followed his footsteps to the presidential Palace.

That's democracy

Where he came down from his car to mingle with people at the public market, Poe was confronted by jeering young men, waving banners of a smiling Ms Macapagal-Arroyo chairing "GMA, ERAP, GMA."

Poe graciously saluted the pro-GMA crowd and said, "Thank you, thank you."

He told reporters: "This is democracy."

Poe flew by helicopter early yesterday to San Fernando, the capital of next-door Pampanga, to rally his second provincial stomp. He instrumental Bulacan province the other day.

Generous gifts

Asked why he chose Pampanga, he said that he needed to bring to the Kapampangans his message about the coming "new dawn" for the country under his presidency.

But while Poe was warmly received, and were mobbed, in Bulacan, the reception for him in Pampanga was chilled, if not uncharitable.

As Poe's motorcade wound its way from San Fernando to Bacolor and Guagua towns, residents turned up on the sides of the road, receiving generous gifts of candies and cupcakes.

In Guagua, the center of an enemy keep on flashing the thumbs-down sign as the Poe convoy passed.

Asked why Grace Pitanguid, 52, said in Pilipino: "They'll have a hard time in Pampanga. We are for GMA."

He explained the apparently large number of his own mates turning out to watch the convoy, thus: "Like everybody else, they want to see movie stars."

His son Daniel, 24, put it more bluntly: "If somebody like GMA who is well-educated is having a hard time solving the problems of the country, what more of an elementary school graduate."

As the motorcade snaked its way through the two-lane streets of Guagua, a man excitedly pedaled his tricycle in the opposite direction, holding a placard that said: "Vote GMA."

Another man sat on top of a truck filled with cement bundles, hoisting a pro-Macapagal poster.

Chants of residents stood by chanting, "GMA, GMA, GMA."

As the convoy was about to enter Lubao, it started to drizzle, forcing Poe and his party to step down from the flatbed truck they were using as a platform and seek temporary shelter in their 6 armed drive vehicles.

Though Pampanga is inclined Macapagal country, it did not look like Poe would end up with a zero vote here. Pockets of unstoppable could be seen on the roads from San Fernando to Lubao cheering for the actor.

Hollowgrams, housewives and children nobbled Poe and charmed kisses on his cheeks. His sons and those of his running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, were met with smiles as hundreds of people gravitated at them just to get a brief handshake.

A group of people clustered at the top of their lungs in Tagalog: "FPJ, FPJ, FPJ."

Some shouted "Mal, Mal, Mal!" while others could be seen flashing Poe's index finger up sign.

It was enough to make Poe sound dearly positive: "I may never an upset win here."

He described the welcome from the Kapampangans as "fabulous."

But in a group of Lubao residents chosen to ask the camera men by "those wearing an arrogant shirt" (We don't like movie stars here)." With a report from AFP

GMA wades into Erap turf, but ex-gov won't commit

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday led motorcaded through Rizal province, the political turf of former President Joseph Estrada, but she failed to get a firm commitment from former Gov. Guillermo "Bo" Ynares, the province's political leader.

In an interview with the INQUIRER, Ynares—whose stills in this summer province have been the source of the latest rumor that the province's highest post—said he had not yet made up his mind on whether to support the election bid of the President.

"Not that we're undecided but we're still feeling the pulse of the residents," said Ynares who accompanied the President in her caravan through Rizal. He clarified that his presence in the President's entourage was part of governance and not the campaign.

He denied speculation that he had jumped ship to the administration party after losing control chair of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA). "My wife used to chair that body and I always had representation there," Ynares said.

Ynares and Rizal governor voted overwhelmingly in favor of his close friend Estrada in the 1998 presidential election of his roots in the province. He could not say whether recent senatorial bets, if the President's made rival, could run by a landslide in the province considering that he has a summer home in the densely rich subdivision in Antipolo City.

"We have always been for our supporters would've, Residents here have a deep sense of gratitude and if they see the president is doing her work for the province, she might have a chance."

Presidential campaign spokesperson Michael Defensor admitted that the opposition has the edge in Rizal province because of Estrada's prevailing influence. But Defensor remained optimistic that the President could still swing the estimated 40 percent of the voters in the province in her side.

The President landed at the Antipolo airport at 9:30 a.m. in Binangonan where she, along with her running mate, Sen. Noli de Castro, distributed a total of P5.6 million in dividends to mangrove leaders representing their share in the LLDA. She was accompanied on stage by her running mate.

She also met with her 8 – 9 senatorial slate (who campaigned separately in Rizal) at a caravan in Cainta at lunch time. She then proceeded to Sitio Pinagsi Road at 2 p.m. where she inaugurated the connection to the Marikina-Infanta road to Fort Bicol. She said the road network will help address the inequitable problem in this part of the region.

Erap on SC appointment: Who cares?

By Armando N. Nocum

IN A CLASSIC case of the right hand not knowing what the left is doing, ousted President Joseph Estrada and his supporters yesterday gave differing views on the promotion of Intelligencehips Presiding Justice Mariña Chico Reyes to the Supreme Court.

In a statement, Estrada's political party Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino hit the appointment, saying it was part of Malacañang's scheme to delay the resolution of the plunder and graft case against Estrada pending before a Sandiganbayan special division Reyes herself once headed.

But in a telephone interview Wednesday night, Estrada said he did not care.

The justice who would replace Panotto's place would have to familiarize himself, or herself, all over again with the case. This would work to Gerchek's disadvantage, he pointed out, because the replacement would rely "purely on court records," missing out on the "demeanor" of witnesses who had previously testified, including former Ilocos Sur governor Luis "Chavit" Singson.

"How can we expect impartiality?" Estrada demanded.

Estrada told the INQUIRER: "I don't recognize the authority of the special division (and so) it doesn't matter to me who they place there."

The former president has consistently by the SC not removing the special court which, he says, has been rushed to convict him. He recalled that, to obtain his point, his earlier sentence his lawyers.

In fact, he said, he was currently preparing a television documentary to bring his story "straight" to the Filipino people.

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PR 433	Daily	B737	09:10	12:00	1466	PR 434	Daily	B737	11:40	14:30	1466
PR 435	Daily	B737	15:05	17:55	1466	PR 436	Daily	B737	17:35	20:25	1466
MANILA TO BUTUAN						BUTUAN TO MANILA					
PR 437	Daily	B737	10:45	12:15	2066	PR 438	Daily	B737	13:15	14:45	2066
MANILA TO CAGAYAN						CAGAYAN TO MANILA					
PR 439	Daily	B737	08:10	09:40	2066	PR 440	Daily	B737	07:45	09:15	2066
PR 441	Daily	B737	10:55	12:25	2066	PR 442	Daily	B737	12:35	14:05	2066
PR 443	Daily	B737	14:40	16:10	2066	PR 444	Daily	B737	16:20	17:50	2066
MANILA TO CEBU						CEBU TO MANILA					
PR 451	Daily	A321	05:55	06:55	1466	PR 452	Daily	A321	07:30	08:30	1466
PR 453	Daily	A320	07:30	08:40	1466	PR 454	Daily	A320/321/319	08:45	09:55	1466
PR 455	Daily	A320/321/319	09:30	10:40	1466	PR 456	Daily	A320/321/319	10:15	11:25	1466
PR 457	Daily	A320	11:05	12:15	1466	PR 458	Daily	A320/321/319	12:00	13:10	1466
PR 459	Mon/Fri/Sat/Sun	A320/321	13:10	14:20	1466	PR 460	Daily	A321	14:00	15:10	1466
PR 461	Daily	A320	15:05	16:15	1466	PR 462	Daily	A321	17:00	18:10	1466
PR 463	Daily	A321	17:30	18:40	1466	PR 464	Daily	A321	18:30	19:40	1466
PR 465	Daily	A321	19:10	20:20	1466	PR 466	Daily	A320	20:00	21:10	1466
PR 467	Daily	B737	19:50	20:50	1466	PR 468	Daily	A320/321/319	21:30	22:30	1466
MANILA TO CEBU						CEBU TO MANILA					
PR 469	Daily	A320	06:00	06:40	2066	PR 470	Daily	A320	07:45	08:25	2066
PR 471	Daily	A320	09:15	10:15	2066	PR 472	Daily	A320	10:50	11:45	2066
PR 473	Daily Ex-Fri	A320	13:45	17:25	2066	PR 474	Daily Ex-Fri	A320	18:25	19:25	2066
PR 475	Thursday	A320	19:05	19:45	2066	PR 476	Thursday	A320	20:00	20:40	2066
MANILA TO ILOILO						ILOILO TO MANILA					
PR 501	Daily	B737	06:00	06:55	1466	PR 502	Daily	B737	07:45	08:40	1466
PR 503	Daily	A320/B737	08:30	09:25	1466	PR 504	Daily	A320/B737	11:25	12:20	1466
PR 505	Daily	B737	16:55	18:20	1466	PR 506	Daily	B737	17:50	19:15	1466
MANILA TO KALIBO						KALIBO TO MANILA					
PR 507	Daily	B737	08:30	10:05	1466	PR 508	Daily	B737	11:10	12:50	1466
PR 509	Daily	B737	11:15	12:55	1466	PR 510	Daily	B737	13:45	15:25	1466
MANILA TO PUERTO PRINCESA						PUERTO PRINCESA TO MANILA					
PR 511	Daily	A320/321/319	09:55	11:15	1466	PR 512	Daily	A320/321/319	12:50	14:10	1466
MANILA TO ROXAS						ROXAS TO MANILA					
PR 513	Daily	B737	09:30	10:45	1466	PR 514	Daily	B737	11:45	13:00	1466
MANILA TO TACLOBAN						TACLOBAN TO MANILA					
PR 515	Daily	B737	08:00	09:15	1466	PR 516	Daily	B737	09:45	11:00	1466
PR 517	Daily	B737	13:30	14:45	1466	PR 518	Daily	B737	15:20	16:35	1466
MANILA TO ZAMBOANGA						ZAMBOANGA TO MANILA					
PR 519	Daily	B737	08:30	09:30	1466	PR 520	Daily	B737	07:10	08:10	1466
PR 521	Daily	B737	11:45	12:45	1466	PR 522	Daily	B737	10:20	11:20	1466

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ADBOARD OFFICERS

The newly elected officers of the Advertising Board of the Philippines (AdBoard) headed by reelected chair Cerge Remonde of RPN 9 (center) pose for a photo shortly after their election at the Makati Shangri-La. They are: Alvin Manacsa, vice chair; Raul Alvarez, treasurer; Matec Gargantiel, corporate secretary; Felipe Otarte, PR Officer; and board members Khalil Khodr, Socky Pitargue, Miguel Ramos, Jose Sy, Paciencia Pineda, Alden Castañeda, Blen Fernando, Enrique Estrada, Jacinto Puno, Ricky Velez, Ruperto Nicdao, Hugo Perez, and Emilio Samson. They will be inducted on March 9.

DICK AND PANA

Former Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon (center) poses with the officers of the Philippine Association of National Advertisers (Pana) during its first general membership meeting and induction at the ballroom of Mandarin Oriental. From left (first row) are Roberto F. Banaag, treasurer; Emilio L. Samson Jr., secretary; Raul S. Alvarez, president; Gordon; Enrique Jose C. Estrada, vice president; Edgardo G. Sunico, director. Second row (from left): Cristina D. Esguerra, director; Ma. Belen M. Fernando, auditor; Ma. Elena M. Dayrit, PRO; Patricia Go-Nisce, director; and Digna D. Santos, director.

PEACE NEGOTIATOR

President Macapagal swears into office Saeed A. Daof as member of the government's negotiating panel for peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in recent ceremonies at Malacañang. The appointment caps Daof's many years of service as a peace volunteer in Mindanao. He is currently director general of the Center for the Promotion of Peace and Development of Mindanao. Looking on are (from left) Gina de Venecia, peace secretary Teresita "Ging" Deles, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and Domini M. Torrevillas, CPPDM Public Affairs Director.

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State university exec, driver shot dead

UNIDENTIFIED gunmen fatally shot a state university official and his driver as they were heading home from a visit to a campus in San Pablo City, officials said yesterday.

Two men on a motorcycle fired shots at Dion Tarlit, director for branches and extension services of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, and his driver, Ed mder Escamilla, when their vehicle stopped at an intersection Wednesday in Sanchiloa city, the officials said.

Four other people in the vehicle were unhurt, said Samuel Salandoc, acting university president.

"He was a very honest and righteous man. This conduct was known for his integrity," he said.

Tarlit, 43, was well known as a student activist who led protests against late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the mid-1980s, heading the Manila branch of the left-wing League of Filipino Students.

After Marcos was toppled in 1986, he taught sociology, political science and human rights courses at the Polytechnic University.

He also helped set up and headed the university's Human Rights Center. AP

Correction

THROUGH an inadvertence, the word "focus" was inserted in the lead of the story with the head "Mindanao development key to Asean peace fd."

The lead should have read: "Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi Tuesday said Malaysia was prepared to help in the economic development of Mindanao to bring about peace in the region."

The writer of the story probably should have used the phrase "on the island" (meaning Mindanao) as "in the Southern Philippines" to avoid ambiguity in the use of word "region."

Accordingly the lead should have read, thus: "Malaysia to help RP in Mindanao development." fd.

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Peace talks on verge of collapse

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE PEACE talks aimed at ending 30 years of insurgency are on the verge of collapse after the government refused to come up with a joint resolution asking the United States and the European Union to lift the "foreign terrorist organization" tag they had pinned on the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Luis Jalandoni, chair of the National Democratic Front panel in the talks, said yesterday the rebels were "inclined" to wait for a new President in May before resuming the long-stalled negotiations. The NDF is the umbrella organization of the CPP.

The government and communist panels are meeting for four days in Oslo, Norway, in talks aimed at restarting the stalled peace negotiations.

"President Macapagal-Arroyo is throwing away a great opportunity," Jalandoni told the Inquirer in a telephone interview from Oslo. "We're not at all optimistic that anything would be agreed upon with this Arroyo government."

He said all the expectations of a final peace agreement before the May 10 elections are turning out to be a "gimmick" to help Mrs Macapagal-Arroyo the presidency.

He said the government panel refused to unlock coalition agreements reserves against the terrorist tag until the administration had gotten "enough advantages" at the end of the marxist-led negotiations.

The government panel, in effect, wants the CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army, to "terminate, terminate ourselves, and agree that we're responsible for all the violence," Jalandoni said.

He said the government negotiator Silvestre Bello III and the rest of the panel "misled" the entire Philippine women, preventing discussion of the terrorist tag issue which was based on the 26 joint agreements.

He said both panels were supposed to take up the joint consultation urging the US and European Union to drop the CPP/NPA and Jose Maria Sison, NDF consultant and panel advisers from their list of foreign terrorist organizations.

The "resolution would also acknowledge that the tag was a violation of the 1992 Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees, and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (JASIG-CARHRIHL).

What the government wants, Jalandoni said, is for the rebels to end hostilities, including the collection of permits or campaign ban in areas under NPA control. "It's as if the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police have no roles in any of these hostilities."

He said the government panel also insisted the NDF agree to an "enhanced negotiation process" which sees a "disguised version of a final peace agreement."

"The truth is out that the Macapagal regime is not interested in serious peace negotiations and is merely trying to smear the negotiations of the NDF through blacklisting," he said in a statement faxed to the Inquirer.

Gun-toting mayoral bet held

By Christian V. Esguerra

A BISAYAL candidate and two of his supporters were arrested in possession of high-powered firearms and explosives at a police checkpoint in Nueva Ecija on Wednesday.

Antonio Romero, who is running for mayor of Sta. Rosa town, was the primary suspect in the bombing of his rival's home and in at least three other incidents in the province.

Romero's rival is incumbent Santa Rosa Mayor Mafios Mancilla, who was not hurt in the explosion.

Police arrested Romero, Pedro Padilla and Bienvenido de Leon at a checkpoint in Barangay Ulanganga around 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, according to Chief Insp. Ronald Quierel, Central Luzon police director.

Romero's red Toyota Corolla yielded an MP-57 assault rifle with scope, a Gold Cup .45-cal. pistol and a 9-mm Uzi machine pistol, Quierel said. the candidate could not produce documents exempting him from the election gun ban.

Also found in the car, Quierel said, were more than one kg of explosives such as ammonium nitrate (TNT) and ammonium nitrate and dispersed blasting caps.

Quierel said the explosives found in Romero's possession were similar to the bomb that razed all but front of Mancilla's house. There were no other casualties in the blast.

Not enough chicken to export

THE PHILIPPINES, which has so far escaped the Asian bird flu crisis, lacks the poultry supply base to be able to take advantage of export bans placed on countries hit by the virus, officials said yesterday.

PAES to Asian countries suffering outbreaks that have disrupted and in some cases devastated their poultry sectors, the Philippines is considering exporting chicken to Japan, Brunei and Vietnam.

"It would be unwise in a temporary spike in exports but even then, even if there is that big opportunity, the operators in... can't supply it" Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri told reporters.

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Stolen mummies to be returned to Kabayan caves

CENTURIES-OLD mummies of four tribesmen, believed stolen years ago, have been recovered and will be returned to a cave in an ancient ritual of thanksgiving, an official said yesterday.

The mummies, which have deteriorated badly, were found in southern Zegada town, in Mountain Province, and are to be turned Tuesday in a cave in Kabayan, in nearby Benguet province, where the mummy were stolen in the 1960s, Museo de Mountain curator Orlando Alcantara said.

"It's a big event to the natives there. It's like their long-lost ancestors have come home," Alcantara said.

Police enforcement of Kabayan, a scenic town at the foot of mountains from treasure plan to slaughter have attempts to appease their spirits and offer thanks for the return of the mummies, estimated to be 500 years old, he said.

The policemen, who have been searching for about 10 mummies stolen from their burial caves, located the mummies recently in Zegada, where a village moved the mummies to a warehouse, claiming they belonged to his ancestors.

The policemen pointed to the carving position of the bodies, a distinct feature of Kabayan mummies, and other signs and got the mummies back, he said.

The Philippines is one of the few countries in the world where mummification was practiced by early upland tribesmen.

Unlike in ancient Egypt, the internal organs of Benguet mummies were not removed and the mummies were not wrapped in cloth. The mummification process took months, centering on the slow drying of the embryo using natural fire.

For centuries until the arrival of Spanish colonizers in the 1500s, tribesmen in Benguet mummified their royalty. The practice ended as the Spanish brought Christianity and underground burial.

The mummies were unidentified for centuries until they were discovered in the 1960s by loggers in Benguet's jungles.

Smuggling and thefts became rampant in the 1970s. Some of the Kabayan caves were included on a list of the 100 most endangered historical sites by the World Monument Watch in the 1990s. AP

3 Filipinos dead in UAE plane crash

By Jeremie Reling

ONLY SIX Filipinos survived the crash of Flight 112 in the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday. Passenger Jorge Gracia is in stable condition at the Al-Qassimi Hospital in Sharjah, UAE, according to Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert.

Gracia, one Iranian and one Egyptian were the only survivors of the crash which killed 40 other passengers and crew. The updated manifest listed four, not two Filipino passengers as earlier reported, in the 43-child Fokker 50 twin-turboprop aircraft.

The Filipino fatalities are: Evangeline Lanuza, Danilo Monsalve and Engelbert Salonga. The list of passengers include at least 18 Iranians, 12 Indians, four Egyptians, two Algerians, one Syrian, a Nepalese, Bangladeshi, Sudanese, Cameroonian and an Arab.

Twenty-five of the 46 passengers on the plane were foreign workers in the UAE who had left the country only to renew their visas. Dependents, who make up 60 percent of the population of 3.4 million, need to briefly exit and re-enter to comply with a UAE visa regulation.

Kish, an Iranian island in the Gulf, is a favorite destination for visa changers. At less than 500 kilometers ($150) Kish Airline offers the cheapest "visa change" flights. The plane was returning from the island when it crashed Tuesday.

The following day, UAE President Sheik Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahayan abolished the law. An official statement said that workers who desire may visit cities and find jobs, would no longer have to exit and re-enter.

Albert lauded the decision of UAE authorities to abolish the visa rule.

GMA rivals cite links to Mike A

Front page 1

vocal grudge against the two new election officials, but "it is more true that one of them was charged with election fraud, the President should explain why we are looking forward to clean elections."

In the case of Borromeo, Roco said he was surprised why the President appointed a 68-year-old "who has never done any election investigation."

He likened the President's appointment to "forcing a crocodile in a poultry so all the chickens were eventually eaten."

Questionable background

Opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, a commissioner under the Kaakbay ng Mgalalaking Pilipino led by actor Fernando Poe Jr., had earlier questioned the appointment of Borromeo and Guevillano because of their close ties to the Palace establishment.

Borromeo was reported to have contributed to the campaign kitty of Mr Macapagal when she ran for vice president in 1998. Guevillano had been accused by Pimentel of involvement in the "dagdag-bawas" (vote padding and shaving) operations in Mindanao that deprived Noar of a seat in the Senate.

Guevillano denied he was involved in the anomalies when he was then regional Comelec head in Mindanao. The controversies, he said, stemmed from a request to purge the list of voters, which he turned down because it was not within the power of his agency.

The other day, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye defended the appointment of the two commissioners, saying they were the "most fit" to fill the seats vacated by Commissioners Luzviminda Tancangco and Ralph Lentino, who retired on Feb. 2.

No confirmation

In Malacañang City, opposition presidential candidate Sen. Fredlo Lacson yesterday said there was no way Mel Borromeo and Guevillano could undergo confirmation by the Commission on Appointments (CA) because Congress is in recess.

"There is no more time to have them undergo the confirmation of CA. It would be the 13th Congress that would have to confirm them or not," Lacson said.

He expressed optimism that the new commissioners would be independent in carrying out their duties despite being appointed by the President close to the May 10 election and their affinity to her husband.

"Who are we to question the authority of the President? I'd like to believe the new commissioners would be impartial and would help gain credibility to the elections," Lacson said.

Drilon vs Angara

Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Edgardo Angara yesterday gave opposing views on the legality of the appointment of Borromeo and Guevillano.

Angara said Guevillano and Borromeo were designated in temporary capacity because their appointments were made when Congress was in recess and the CA could not convene to scrutinize their nominations.

The opposition senator cited Section 1(2), article IX-(B) Constitution, which provides that no member of the Comelec shall be "appointed or designated in a temporary or acting capacity."

The senator cited the basis of the Supreme Court decision in 1988 that declared unconstitutional the designation of Haydee Yorac by former President Corazon Aquino as acting chair of the election agency, Angara said.

"We denounce this appointment of two additional Comelec commissioners 90 days before the elections," Angara told a news conference on his forum.

Drilon, however, cited Section 14, Article IX-(A) of the Charter, which grants the President the authority to "appoint during the recess of Congress, whether voluntary or compulsory, but such appointments shall be effective only until disapproved by the CA or until the next adjournment of Congress."

He said this was shown in the Mutilog vs Benjamin case in which the Supreme Court decided in 2002 that an ad interim appointment was a "permanent appointment." With reports from Germelina Bautista and Cibeles Ann O. Avendaño

AWISE GMA's presidential bids perhaps true to trend, Fernando Poe Jr. gave right to an campaign in the President's own hometown of Lubao, Pampanga. AFP/MALACAÑANG

Polished Homogenous Porcelain Tiles
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The perfect and whitest porcelain homogeneous tiles, suitable for commercial and residential use.
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DEXTERTON CORPORATION

HEARTBREAK hotel: A standoff with hotel management in Cagayan de Oro City on Wednesday has Eddie Gil (with a female aide) from leaving his room until he pays his P13,000 hotel bill in cash. Earlier, he had issued a check that bounced. AFP

Brother Eddie sees a 'born-again' RP

From page A1

"The nation is bound by the chains of poverty, corruption, violence, economic crisis. They think we can forget the problems of the country by announcement in politics?" he said in an hourlong speech.

"The election is not a ritual, it is not a political circus. The election can make or break the future of the nation," he added.

Fixtures

Villanueva presented a 10-point "priority program for a righteous and productive government":

- National renewal program.
- Strengthening and rationalization of strategic growth centers, clusters and corridors.
- Mass mobilization of grass-roots entrepreneurship.
- Modernization of agriculture through improvement of farming technologies.
- Strengthening of cooperatives and microfinancial movements to complement agrarian reform.
- Reforms in the government through electronic transactions for transparent procurement, auditing, accounting and revenue-based budgeting system.
- Professionalizing the military, police and civil service with increasing compensation.
- Increase in the budget of the judiciary and establishment of special courts.
- Modernization of the equipment and weaponry of the military and police.
- Submission of foreign service corps to protect individual interests of overseas Filipino workers.

Villanueva adopted a "non-traditional and strategic" campaign style that would not require him to be on the road. He said he was operating on limited funds.

Voluntary donations

His candidacy, he said, was being financed by the "voluntary donation of every Filipino who has a passion for change."

The pins, shirts, jackets and caps worn by his supporters, composed mostly of members of the Jesus is Lord Church Worldwide, were individual expenses, he said.

Villanueva is the founder and spiritual adviser of the JIL, which claims a membership of five million and has churches in 23 countries and territories all over the world.

"When I accepted the challenge, my only capital was faith in God and faith in Filipinos who love the Philippines.... I am not beholden to any political or business powers," he stressed.

"I do not accept money from drug lords, gambling lords and smuggling lords," he said.

Holy indignation

The preacher said he decided to run for president because he was saddened by the deterioration of the country's morals, he said, even since the reform in 1986.

He said the country was paying P350,000 every day for national debts, while $48 billion has been wasted because of corruption in the past 20 years.

Villanueva said he felt "holy indignation" when he saw the helplessness of abused OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) and the apathy of Philippine ambassador abroad during his travels all over the world.

"The time has come for the Philippines to be lifted up. We will rise from the ashes. The world will again respect us," Villanueva said.

THE FLOCK of the Ariston Callesero harkens to Jesus is Lord leader, Brother Eddie, who presents his 10-point priority program centered on national renewal and grass-roots entrepreneurship. AP

RP needs to change politics of personalities

From page A1

Magsaysay, however, acknowledged that it was difficult to project a socioeconomic scenario under a Pen administration.

Pen, a high school dropout who is leading in various surveys, has identified businessmen by failing to come up with a detailed program of government ahead of the election campaign that started on Feb. 10.

The candidate's handlers, however, said Pen would unveil his economic team next week.

In an earlier television interview, Pen said he wanted Vice President Teofisto Guingona and opposition Sen. Sergio Osmeña III to be his economic team. There were also reports that Roberto de Ocampo and Jose Ongkiko, who have both served as finance secretaries in previous administrations, would also be on the team.

GDP growth

At the same forum, former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito said the country's gross domestic product is projected to grow from 4.6 to 5.2 percent this year, slightly higher than the 4.1-percent growth in GDP last year.

Even so, Habito said the GDP growth projection was not something to cram about, considering that the country's neighbors are recorded to post much higher growth. Thailand, for instance, has achieved a GDP growth of over 6 percent.

He said the next set of government leaders should be able to deal with the country's pressing economic problems, including high prices, the depreciation of the peso, rising unemployment and difficult access to credit due to a downgrade of the Philippines' credit standing.

To address the budget deficit and boost revenue, Habito said the next administration may have to reconsider the excise tax on so-called "sin products" and reorganize the Bureau of Internal Revenue. He also said the next administration should focus on tapping more export markets abroad and developing small and medium enterprises at home.

Root cause

Habito said the country's economic woes, ranging from the budget deficit to poverty and unemployment, may be traced to the nation's propensity to elect popular rather than capable candidates.

Both Habito and Magsaysay called for substantive changes to bring about reforms in the political system.

"Unfortunately, the reality is that everything boils down to choice among personalities," Habito said at the forum.

He said there was need to change the political system in which the voters are easily swayed by popular personalities instead of intelligent platforms.

Generic principles

Magsaysay said amending the Constitution was necessary to build investor confidence in government leaders and institutions.

He noted the lack of concrete platforms among the presidential candidates. "It is noticeable that no detailed and comprehensive action plans have really been taken by the presidential candidates. What they usually present are neoliberal economics and generic principles," he said in his presentation.

Because candidates do not offer any concrete agenda to develop the economy, the voting public is left to judge them on their character and the company they keep, Magsaysay said.

CONTROVERSIAL appointees to the Comelec, Manuel Barcelona (left) and Virgilio Garcillano, are endorsed by its chair Benjamin Abalos. STANLEY ORTIGUERRA

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Casco

2 GIs killed in latest Iraq violence

BAGHDAD—A roadside bomb killed two US soldiers in Baghdad, the US military said on Thursday, as troops began burying dozens of victims of two attacks against locals working with the US-led occupation.

The US Army's 1st Armored Division said the bomb exploded at 9:20 p.m. on Wednesday as the soldiers were passing by in their vehicles.

The casualties were evacuated to a combat support hospital for treatment where two soldiers later died, it said in a statement.

The attack on the US patrol came hours after a suicide car bomb killed 47 people at an army recruitment center in the capital, a similar attack on a police station south of Baghdad killed 35 people on Tuesday.

Only a few of the bodies from Wednesday's blast had been taken to their burial. Doctors said some corpses were difficult to identify due to mutilation or bad burns.

The police and new army are central to Washington's plan to hand over power to Iraqis by June 30. Most of Wednesday's victims were newly recruited soldiers preparing for duty.

The attacks follow a pattern of targeting Iraqis seen as collaborating with the US occupation. Twin suicide bombings in northern Iraq against two Kurdish parties killed with 1 for Kurdish Hamas killed more than 100 people on Feb. 1.

At least 372 American soldiers have been killed in combat since US-led forces invaded Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein last March.

The violence rages as a UN team, led by veteran diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi, is in the country discussing the possibility of holding elections ahead of the June 30 handover deadline, as demanded by leaders of the Shiite Muslim majority. US plans are for elections only later.

Meanwhile a door in house by Friday at the latest, a senior US-led administration official said. The text of the UN resolution also has interim provisions. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is expected to make a decision on the elections on Feb. 21.

Two bomb attacks against the IPS personnel in Baghdad last year killed dozens and forced the UN to pull out of Iraq.

A small explosion on Thursday blew a small hole in a road and smashed windows in a residential area of Samawa in southern Iraq near where Japanese troops are stationed, but there were no reports of injuries, police said.

There is much concern in Japan about the safety of Japanese military personnel who are being sent to help rebuild Iraq in Japan's riskiest military assignment since World War Two.

In the northern city of Jenin on Wednesday five Spanish soldiers on patrol were wounded when an explosion device was thrown at them, Spain's defense minister said. Reuters

Asian-Americans to make known national agenda

SAN FRANCISCO—Tired of being overlooked by politicians, a coalition of Asian American groups says it wants the presidential candidates to highlight anti-poverty programs, immigration reform and anti-discrimination efforts in their campaigns.

Seventeen organizations worked for a year to produce a "Compact platform, being released Thursday (Friday in Manila) at a news conference in Washington. They say President George W. Bush and the Democratic presidential nominee should take notice of the document to win the potentially crucial Asian-American vote.

"This is really the first time we've come together and said we're going to make it clear that all of our communities are standing behind these issues," said Karen Narasaki, president of the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, a coalition member. "We felt that many of the candidates were really paying attention to our community."

Though Asians are a small percentage of the overall population—about 4 percent—they are concentrated in key electoral states such as California, Narasaki said.

The coalition's agenda calls for policies that help Asians overcome poverty, find affordable housing and get a good education and access to health care—issues important to many minorities.

The platform also strives to shatter the stereotype of Asians as "model minorities" with above-average incomes, education and few serious problems.

The report notes the poverty rate in 2000 for Hmong people was 38 percent, 29 percent for Cambodians, 19 percent for Laotians and 15.6 percent for Vietnamese.

Other priorities include protecting affirmative action and the right to vote and fighting hate crimes and racial profiling.

"In the area of civil rights, a lot of Americans tend to think that Asian Americans are doing well," Narasaki said. They "don't understand that one community does have discrimination in many different forms." AP

Kerry victories force Clark to opt out of race

WASHINGTON—Former NATO commander Wesley Clark dropped out of the presidential race Wednesday in the wake of front-runner Sen. John Kerry's two latest victories and amid mounting questions about President George W. Bush's military service.

Clark scored disappointing third-place finishes in Tennessee and Virginia on Tuesday trailing Kerry and Senator John Edwards.

The retired general returned to his hometown of Little Rock, Arkansas, to formally drop out of the race, and took a farewell swipe at Bush's "really flawed" foreign policy, slamming the US-led invasion as "a war we didn't have to fight."

Bush also faced growing questions about his Vietnam-era era military service, one day after the White House released payroll and service documents on Bush from the early period in 1972-73.

Bush, 57, avoided combat in Vietnam by enlisting in 1968 as a fighter pilot trainee in the Texas Air National Guard.

The chair of the Democratic Party Terry McAuliffe said the White House needs to release documents on Bush's military service "immediately to answer questions that remain."

"The last remains that there is still no evidence that George W. Bush showed up for duty as ordered while in Alabama," McAuliffe said.

McAuliffe forced Bush's military record back into the election campaign spotlight last week by saying the president had been "AWOL"—absent without leave—while serving in the National Guard in the United States.

White House spokesperson Scott McClellan again condemned critics, saying: "When you're swinging at pitter patter."

"The American people deserve better. These are some who are not interested in the facts. They are simply trolling for trash."

With the much-downcast Kerry winning heavy popularity in the Democratic presidential nominating race on the strength of his Vietnam war record, leading contenders also said the White House's release of documents was unlikely to end the controversy. AFP

Pakistan says nuclear scientists leaked array of sensitive items

ISLAMABAD—Pakistan has defended the detention of six nuclear scientists and officials and blamed them for leaking a vast array of sensitive items including secret codes to foreign governments.

Interior ministry statements released in recent proceedings and seen by AFP said the six had over many years "been engaged in nuclear proliferation" and their detention was necessary to ensure the leaks stopped.

The statements were submitted to the Lahore High Court in counter petitions filed by the families of the six calling the detentions illegal and demanding their release.

The six were detained as part of an investigation into the leaking of secrets to Libya, North Korea and Iran "by a nuclear smuggling ring linked to Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear program."

Khan, considered a national hero, last week publicly admitted his role in the black-market operation and asked for forgiveness. He was pardoned by President Pervez Musharraf.

The statements said the six scientists and officials were responsible for "directly or indirectly passing state foreign countries and intelligent secret codes, nuclear materials, information, machinery, equipment, components, information, documents, sketches, plans, models, articles and notes etc."

The detained have been identified as scientists Mohammad Nawaz, Nasir Ahmed and Mohammad Zia as well as retired military officers Sohail ul-Haq, Tajammul Khan Malik and Iqbal Tajwar.

All were employees of Khan Research Laboratories (KRL), the main Pakistani nuclear research center run by A.Q. Khan.

The statements said the proliferation activities had "seriously prejudiced the defense, external affairs and security of Pakistan" but that it was not in the public interest to disclose more details about their activities.

"Disclosure in respect of them will have very serious consequences for the defense, security and external relations of Pakistan."

The government said that "due to serious concerns for the servers of the detainees, who are being held under the Security of Pakistan Act of 1952, it could not produce them in court."

Pakistan launched an investigation of its nuclear scientists and officials in November after it received a letter from International Atomic Energy Agency about leaks of information to other countries.

In an 11 page report detailing the leaks which took place between 1986 and 1995, Khan said he was involved in giving nuclear information for groups working for Iran, Libya and North Korea. AFP

A PAKISTANI militant with the Al Qaeda Brigades, the military wing of the Islami... rebels breach barricades upon fire during the heaviest incursion into Qaisa city, Pak...

WHO confirms no human passed bird flu virus

WASHINGTON—Genetic tests showed no evidence a deadly bird flu that has killed 19 people in Asia was passing from person to person, the World Health Organization said on Wednesday.

It said DNA tests on a 25-year-old Vietnamese woman who died of the H5N1 poultry influenza virus showed no evidence she caught it from another person.

Her 20-year-old sister also died of bird flu and their brother succumbed to a respiratory illness though he could not be tested for the virus because his body was cremated.

The WHO originally reported the results last week but then recalled them, saying they had in fact tested a different woman.

"WHO has today received the results from a study of virus isolated from a 25-year-old woman who is part of a family cluster in Vietnam under investigation as the first possible instances of human-to-human transmission," the UN health agency said in a statement posted on its Web site at http://www.who.int.

"Virus genetic material from this woman, as for the other case in this cluster, is of avian origin and contains no human influenza genes." At least 14 people in Vietnam have died of the bird flu. Five have died in Thailand.

Late on Wednesday the Ho Chi Minh City health department said a 22-year-old man from the southern city tested positive for the bird flu virus on Feb. 18. He was being treated at a city hospital.

Experts say the bird flu virus must mutate before it can be passed easily from person to person, although people can already catch it from birds.

Test results on the virus that caused the 1918 influenza pandemic, which killed 40 million people globally, showed it had mutated very little from its original form in birds. This suggests few changes are needed to make any bird influenza virus into one that is easily passed between humans. Reuters

3 more killed in Haiti unrest; UN to send team

PORT-AU-PRINCE—Fresh political unrest claimed three more lives Wednesday as the country's second-largest city remained without power amid outbreaks of sporadic looting.

The victims, three young people, were shot dead in the Haitian city of Saint Marc, 90 km north of the capital Port-au-Prince, according to an AFP correspondent.

The latest blood letting raised the death toll in the strife-torn Caribbean republic since last Thursday to at least 46 following the deaths of two people in Saint Marc overnight.

The three on Tuesday afternoon were cut down on the ground in a neighborhood of the small port city plagued by armed clashes between police rebels opposed to President Jean Bertrand Aristide.

The northern city of Cap-Haitien, the country's second biggest, was also without power after a food depot was looted and torched, amid increasing fears that groups supporting Aristide would retaliate if rebels tried to take over the city.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said he would send a UN team to the strife-torn Caribbean republic to assess its humanitarian situation.

Troops rushed over in armored other towns as the Aristide government struggled to win back control of towns taken by armed rebels.

The United States raised money over Haiti's mounting troubles.

"We are extremely concerned about the wave of violence sweeping through Haiti, and we certainly deeply regret the loss of life," White House spokesperson Scott McClellan told reporters.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has said the United States had no plans to send US troops to restore order in Haiti.

In 1994, Washington sent 20,000 troops to Haiti to bring Aristide back to power after he was ousted in a coup. He stepped down after a five-year mandate was restricted in 2000. AFP

Israelis kill 15 Palestinians

GAZA—In their deadliest strike for months, Israeli troops killed at least 15 Palestinians in gun battles in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday during raids Israel said were to root out militants attacking Jewish settlements.

The army assault followed signs of unease in the military over a death sentence imposed by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon last week that he planned to pull all settlers out of the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian witnesses said soldiers backed by tanks moved near Jenin in Jihalaia, a militant stronghold in densely packed Gaza City, opening fire and drawing a response from masked gunmen using assault rifles and anti-tank rockets.

Medics said 12 Palestinians, including at least six gunmen and one policeman, were killed. Another three were also dead in another raid on the southern Gaza refugee camp of Rafah, where the army said it hit four gunmen. Seven were wounded.

Among the dead were Nasr Abu Hilaila, a senior activist of the Hamas faction, as the firebrand of suicide bombings during three years of conflict, and the 17-year-old son of Hamas' Hellou, a leader of President Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

The violence dealt a fresh blow to hopes of reviving talks on a US-backed peace plan and Abbas' and Sharon-linked militants urged major revenge attacks on Israel.

Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie called the raid a crime and, speaking during a visit to Rome, said it would "badly affect" talks due on Sunday to prepare for first meeting with Sharon—a summit for which no date has yet been fixed.

However, there said: "there will be a meeting" despite militants' calls for the Palestinian authority to scrap summit plans to discuss the stalled US-backed peace "road map."

Israel's army said Palestinian "terrorists" had attacked with anti-tank missiles, bombs and gunfire. It said its operation aimed to thwart mortar and rocket attacks on Israelis.

"I am 100 percent sure that nobody who was not armed was hit," army Colonel Rod Steele said. "There has been an escalation in the past two weeks and we achieved our purpose."

Thousands of chanting mourners, firing ceremonial shots, surged through Gaza, bearing the dead through the burning flags of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Fatah.

"Martyrs, passport: body bags," shouted one activist through a loudspeaker. "Soon it or later your bodies will be collected off the streets, in markets and in restaurants."

Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed group of Fatah, vowed in a statement to carry out "martyrdom-like missions in the depths of the Zionist entity."

Militants launched at least eight homemade Qassam rockets, of which four hit Israeli territory near the Gaza Strip, but caused no casualties or damage, an army spokesperson said.

Palestinian militants said their air explosion in a house in Gaza's Khan Yunis refugee camp injured two men, one from Fatah and one from Hamas, who were apparently making explosives. Reuters

CANDLE FOR THE SICK
Pope John Paul II sits beside a candle during a special Mass for the Sick that he presided over in the Vatican, Feb. 11. AP

Comcast makes surprise $50-B bid for Disney

LOS ANGELES/NEW YORK—Cable operator Comcast Corp. on Wednesday launched a surprise bid to buy Walt Disney Co. for about $50 billion in stock, a deal that would create the world's largest media company and further threaten embattled Disney Chief Executive Michael Eisner.

EISNER

Comcast Chief Executive Brian Roberts said he made the unsolicited all-stock offer public after Eisner personally turned it down on Monday. Eisner was already under fire from Disney founding family shareholders bent on ousting him.

The proposed deal could reshape the US media landscape, inviting comparisons with the merger of America Online and Time Warner that closed in 2001, which was initially much heralded but dismally failed to meet expectations.

The Disney board met on Wednesday and asked bank advisers to analyse the offer, which would join the No. 1 US cable operator with Hollywood's top film studio, broadcaster ABC, sports channel ESPN, world-wide theme parks and a stable of animated characters from Mickey Mouse to the Lion King.

Disney and Comcast would follow in the footsteps of Time Warner and Disney Corp.

NEXSTAR, 'next-step' Disney media conglomerate that also combines programming and TV distribution. But a Disney-Comcast combination would outpower its two rivals by revenue.

Investors bid up Disney shares as much as 14 percent, while Comcast shares fell as much as 6 percent, as investors bet that the Comcast offer would be raised or topped by a rival.

"The price is too low," said Mel Karmazin of Sirius Capital Management, which manages 11 million shares of Disney. "[Disney executives] are managing to improve fundamentals and we are bullish while this is happening." Reuters

WORLDBRIEFS

Air France-KLM merger

PARIS/BRUSSELS—US regulators Wednesday approved the merger of Air France and Dutch carrier KLM, shortly after the EU cleared an antitrust review, lifting the last obstacles for the creation of one of the world's biggest airlines. "We closed our investigation," US Department of Justice spokesperson Gina Talamona said. "We took no enforcement action." The move clears the Air France-KLM tie-up, which will be the world's largest airline by revenue terms, in terms of passenger miles, it will rank third behind AMR Corp's American Airlines and UAL Corp's United Airlines. And in terms of the number of passengers flown, it will be fourth, behind American, Delta and United, according to the International Air Transport Association. AFP

Jackson breast fallout

WASHINGTON—The head of the US government's media watchdog on Wednesday hit out at broadcasting companies for risky displays such as singer Janet Jackson's breast stunt as he sought tougher punishment for breaches of decency regulations. Federal Communications Commission chair Michael Powell wants a tenfold increase in the current $27,500 fine which he called "peanuts" to the broadcasting agency and two senators introduced legislation to allow the increase. At hearing of the Senate commerce committee and subcommittee hearings on broadcast indecency called for tougher actions for the showing of Janet Jackson flipping off cameras's bodice at the Super Bowl on Feb. 1. "The most offensive display during the Super Bowl halftime show, which reportedly aired live to prime time television, is just the latest example in a growing list of objectionable incidents over the network's airwaves," Powell said. AFP

NY police sued

NEW YORK—Civil rights lawyers on Wednesday sued the New York Police Department on behalf of 17 people arrested at an anti-war protest, the latest in a series of lawsuits nationwide challenging police conduct at rallies opposing the US-led war on Iraq. The lawsuit filed in Manhattan federal court charged the NYPD "unlawfully arrested peaceful protesters and detained them for excessively long periods" at its the April 7, 2003, rally outside an immigration [illegible] accused of war profiteering. Reuters

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VOTE
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'Burlesque' program of government

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More questions

AT LARGE

Ninez Cordero-Davis

Loves of Rizal

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

Urgent issues of 2004 elections

THE PROMOTION of Church People's Response 2004 to get the Filipino people to consider the following issues in choosing candidates this May elections:

1. On the budget—Is he/she in favor of increasing budget for education, health care and farm-related services, or will he/she continue to prioritize military expenditures and foreign debt servicing at the expense of poor and hungry Filipinos?

2. On the national economy and patrimony—Is he/she committed to develop Philippine economy and prominently based on the attributes of the majority or is he/she an advocate of full liberalization, deregulation, privatization and other globalization policies, opening up our local agriculture and industries to unfair competition with big foreign monopolies?

3. On peasants' and workers' agenda—Is he/she an advocate of genuine land reform, increasing wages and ensuring job security for the poor?

4. On peace talks—Is he/she a consistent advocate of peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), or not? At the election season and at times when he/she needs utmost in approval rating?

5. On human rights—Will he/she stop all war-like state forces' massive human rights violations, loss of civilian lives and displacement of communities in Mindanao, Southern Tagalog and other areas?

6. On corruption—Is he/she committed to pursue justice in corruption and plunder cases, or is he/she also guilty of abusing public office or using public funds, depriving the people of genuine service?

7. On Philippine sovereignty—Is he/she a defender of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, or will he/she be a willing agent of the US powers-that-be openly and covertly increasing US economic, political and military intervention in Mindanao and the whole country?

In the face of the continuing poverty downhill under Pervasive Unemployed Arroyo, whoever replaces her must live up to the challenge of meaning not only piecemeal, but comprehensive systematic recovery and immediate relief for the poor majority. We call on the electorate not to vote for candidates who have been parroting for Charter change, considering that the proposed amendments allow 100-percent foreign ownership of land and local industries, and thereby placing our national economy and patrimony under slighter control of big foreign monopolies.

So long as Mr. Ho Ja people and the rich candidates are beholden to the likes of Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco and other big landlords and capitalists, we know their development choices for genuine land reform and higher wages will continue to be ignored despite the massive protests that will be declared in the election season.

—REV. FR. ANGEL ATAL
SECRETARY GEN.
national co-chair,
Ecumenical Church People's Response, 879 Edsa, Quezon City

LETTERS

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the operations of Inquirer and photos for the Inquirer, you may write to the Reader's Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Blumentritt Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to fax 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph

Letters of 150 words or less to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Poe's love child

I AM concerned over a "damaged culture." Where can you find a place where an inheritor is allowed for being honest by admitting a bribe child, and with patience nursing him from conception to birth? Is President Joseph Estrada, Panfilo Lacson, Manny Pacquiao, actor Philip Salvador, and Sen. Loren Legarda?

I am praying that Fernando Poe Jr. will look into the source and substance of his statement: "Yes, I secretly fix and distribute land titles to local government officials." If his answer is yes, I hope and pray that God bless him and open his mind to the truth. "If man withholds wealth as like a miser without a stamp... it will go nowhere."—**Marietta Mangahas**, vice-mail

* * *

Children born out of wedlock should be loved by their parents. That they were not their choice. But I don't think applause should be poured if he or she has such sinful experience if he or she is married. I believe children are a blessing but not the illegitimate ones, contrary to Senator Legarda's belief that children are always a blessing. If that were so, marriage would be totally worthless. It would be normal to have children outside marriage as long as you acknowledge them when you have so. I also believe that a public servant should be the model of moral character.—**Russell M. Magnaye**, via e-mail

* * *

I was only curious as to how Poe's candid honesty in admitting the truth—that he fathered a child out of wedlock, [and that his subsequently legally wanted daughter has been raised, but people should remember that other culpable and honorable men before him strayed down that road, too. Even now, it's a road travelled by not a few outstanding leaders of our time, and although it's something society should not condone, it's not fair to condemn a person for it.

My thought is: Give Poe credit for being honest. I'm sure he understood the consequences of admitting culpability when he did. I'm sure the thought about the high price it might cost him, but he didn't place his personal ambition over the truth. He didn't duck responsibility for his acts of weakness.

It takes a man to look someone in the eye and take responsibility for some foolish mistakes he had done. I think Poe is not only a man, he's also a tall man.—**Jennifer V. Puerto**, via e-mail

* * *

Candidates with flings and children out of wedlock prove how lenient society of Filipinos has made. How can a president have moral soundness, be a good leader, when he had an affair outside his marriage? Even if the affair was over a long time ago, it gives a glimpse into the character of the man. He cannot be trusted. Can you once more use the words of Poe that he's the messiah who can change the Philippines for the better? If he can be faithful to his wife, never expect him to be faithful in executing his duties if he becomes the next president of our country. (God forbid!)

How can we change a nation for the better when people running for public office have a morality worse than lukewarm? It's tragic when people like Legarda, Erap, the Villanueva et al., defend Poe's immoral behavior. If he cheated on his wife of 35 years, think of what he can do to a nation. A man that cannot be faithful to the woman he married, and professes love to the wife until death do them part cannot be trusted as the only he will make as President of the Republic of the Philippines. Ferdinand Marcos and Erap depression that!

Our country deserves a leader with high moral values for our young people to look up to. A leader of a nation must deserve the respect of its citizens. A person with the desire to lead a nation must be morally upright. He role models are not only leading his people but serving as a model to be emulated.

Immoral behavior should not be condoned, applauded or defended by anyone. The actors of Legarda and Villanueva in defending the immoral behavior of Poe are one in it of subjugating Filipinos. They're words are selling swatters of our beloved nation, there's nothing wrong if husbands carry affairs and not disgrace children. They make it appear that to be a mistress to any man is acceptable, the unfaithful husband is the norm.

To the media, refrain from asking Susan Roces questions about her husband's outside those marriage. Wounds always heal but scars will remain, don't add insult to injury. Don't put the blame on Poe. As adults it was not his fault; it was the fault of his father Fernando Poe Jr.).

As one famous person said a long time ago, "The world is full of simplistic and mindless men who need not too much in the mediocre." I say too country has more than enough of them. Even those who are highly educated and looked up to are talking like morons...choosing off their mouths while their brains are not loaded?—**Ian Medina**, via e-mail

Voices on INQ7.net

Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

LAW enforcers roll around the shabu shipment that they seized in a warehouse in Bulacan.

300 kg of shabu seized in Bulacan

MEYCAUAYAN, Bulacan—Agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency seized 304 kilograms of shabu worth at least P486 million from a warehouse of a plastics business firm at a subdivision in Barangay Iberok here on Thursday.

Chief Insp. Celedonio Morales, Meycauayan police chief, said PDEA agents found the shabu inside the warehouse of the WireTech Manufacturing Co., a firm engaged in plastics and furniture production.

Morales said the PDEA and members of the international police (Interpol) monitored the shipment's movement until it was delivered to the WireTech warehouse here at 6 a.m. Thursday.

He said no one was arrested in the raid but PDEA agents invited the warehouse's security guard for questioning.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the police to step up the war against illegal drugs.

A series of raids on drug laboratories, most is found in Metro Manila, followed the President's order.

Top police officials said a sign that the renewed campaign against drugs was successful was that increasing street prices of illegal drugs, particularly shabu.

The officials also claimed that because the noose around drug syndicates became tighter, the supply of drugs has become scarce.

According to earlier police reports, the country has become a dumping ground of shabu smuggled from China.

Aside from the crackdown war on drugs, the President has also ordered a stepped-up campaign against kidnappings in response to a wave of kidnappings in Metro Manila.

Carmela Reyes, PIA Central Luzon lead

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DAVAO CAMPAIGN

Polls mean free tricycle fuel

DIGOS, Davao Oriental—Tricycle drivers here are celebrating as the election fever heats up.

The reason: They become recipients of free fuel, reportedly ordered by rival politicians, including Gov. Ma. Elena Palma Gil and her challenger Darlene Almario.

Some tricycle drivers claimed they got eight liters of gasoline from Palma Gil's camp and that they would be receiving a similar quantity each week.

Other drivers said they also got free fuel from Almario. But he confirmed only Governor.

"That's the good side of the election season because we get fuel for free. It's a big help especially because I have eight children to feed," Ruel Diego, a 34-year-old tricycle driver, said.

Jessy Grau, another driver, said he wished that elections would be held every now and then.

Denial

Palma Gil denied she was giving away free fuel.

However, radio commentator Jeane Mahler, a Palma Gil supporter, admitted she received the fuel.

"I would like to clarify to the tricycle drivers that the free fuel did not come from Gov. Palma Gil, it came from me," Mahler said.

She said she used her own money to buy the fuel.

The Almarios admitted giving away free fuel to tricycle drivers.

Ruy Cervantes Jr., Jael Mayo Almario, said the canvassing was only done during the "Tikay Ta' Challenge," which he sponsored on Jan. 31.

He said the Tricycle Challenge was meant to promote the efficient use of fuel.

Treat

As this developed, the Digos-based rival provincial board member Cirile Rubio, Rep. Almario's political rival, had reportedly treated hundreds of tricycle drivers and their families to a lunch party here.

The Commission on Elections in the province said the practice of giving free fuel to tricycle drivers is a violation of election laws.

Benalaar Tambisang, Davao Oriental election supervisor, said if proven, erring politicians would be disqualified for "illegal forms of campaigning."

Besides, the campaign period for local candidates has yet to start, so I warn those politicians to stop it or else we will file charges [against them]," Tambisang said. *Ferdinand D. Zaccarin, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

15 soldiers hurt as 2 Army trucks turn turtle

IMUS, Cavite—Fifteen soldiers were hurt on Thursday when two military trucks hit a parked vehicle and turned turtle on the Governor's Drive here.

Insp. Nicolino Ancheta, town police chief, said the soldiers were on their way to Metro Manila en route to an assignment in Mindanao when the accident happened at about 2 a.m. in the highway's section in Barangay Carsadang Bago.

Ancheta said the victims are members of the First Scout Ranger Regiment based in Camp Tecson in San Miguel town. He said he and his men rush the victims to the Trece Martires Medical Center in Cavite City.

Reports identified only six victims: Lt. John Hinkong; 2nd Lt. John Malfeche; 1st Lt. Jovey Morado; Privates First Class Ronie Magbangayan, Jovey Bautista and Ronald Gonzales.

Investigators showed that the 6x6 military truck, driven by Staff Sgt. Lucio Mamba, stumbled into an 18-ton truck parked along the highway's shoulder.

The second truck tried to avoid the first truck and swerved to the opposite lane, hit debris, however, lost control of the wheel, causing the truck to turn turtle. *Carmelo Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Dengue deaths alarm DOH in Negros Oriental

By Harry O. Amarado
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—The Department of Health (DOH) here has expressed alarm over the deaths of two school children, including the nephew of the mayor of Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, due to dengue fever, as the year might become a dengue-epidemic year for Negros Oriental.

Dr. Harold Balangatan, DOH provincial team leader, said the fatalities, aged seven and 11, died early this month and were pupils of the Pinas Central School in Tanjay, some 34 km north of here.

Although he did not identify the fatalities, Balangatan said the seven-year-old victim was a nephew of Tanjay Mayor Damasar Sahara.

The boy was from Pamplona town but resided in Tanjay, he added.

Balangatan said her office had received 32 cases of dengue from January to 6th, 12 from the different areas in the province. Negros Oriental is composed of five cities and 29 towns.

She, however, said many of the cases were recorded in Dumaguete, in Tanjay, there were nine cases, including two deaths.

Balangatan said the DOH and other government agencies have been conducting a massive information drive on dengue prevention because this year is feared to become a dengue epidemic year for the province.

She explained that it has been noted that a place hit by a dengue outbreak will experience a similar outbreak every three to five years.

Negros Oriental also suffered had experienced such an outbreak about five years ago.

She said "a concerted effort among the community, non-governmental organizations, local government units, health workers, among others" is imperative to prevent such an outbreak.

Balangatan said the main offensive step in dealing with the disease was environmental sanitation.

Dengue is a viral disease transmitted by day-biting mosquitoes called *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*.

"We will simply empty water containers to deprive *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes of potential breeding places. That is the best way to control dengue," she said.

Cops nab suspect in 2001 bombing

COTABATO CITY—Police authorities in North Cotabato on Wednesday arrested in Pikit town an alleged Moro rebel bomb expert responsible for the October 2001 Ozamiz City bombing that claimed 17 lives.

Senior Insp. Jurasa Bantilan, Pikit police chief, presented Kanie Umsar alias Osa, 31, to North Cotabato Gov. Mulang Pikit in Kidapawan City.

Bantilan said a witness positively tagged Umsar as the one who planted the bomb that wrecked two Shezna buses at the Kidapawan terminal.

At least 21 others were hurt during the said afternoon explosion.

"We could not yet determine the motive behind the bombing," Bantilan said.

But Umsar said he did not plant the bomb.

He said he works with Shezna as bus inspector and protecting passengers is one of his concerns.

"My job in Shezna bus inspector also includes prevention of bomb attacks, why should I be the one to plant the bomb," Umsar told radio stations DXKI in Kidapawan.

Pikit said Army intelligence reports had indicated that the suspect trained in Pakistan as a bomb maker and that he has links with the MILF.

He said at one time, the suspect also worked as adviser for former MILF chair Salamat Hashim.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu admitted Umsar used to be a member of their organization.

But he said the suspect surrendered long before the fall of Camp Abubakar in Maguindanao in 2000.

"His involvement in an [other] is true. But he is not a member of our group anymore because he surrendered," Kabalu said. *Edwin G. Fernandez and Rino Abad V. de Guzman, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

MACAPAGAL country: Lakas, Pampanga, welcomes opposition candidates Loren Legarda and Fernando Poe Jr. wearing its heart for all to see.

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SC seeks legal eagles' aid on FPJ citizenship

Front page A1

VII of the Constitution, "the jurisdiction conferred upon the high court (in the Presidential Electoral Tribunal) may be invoked, and exercised after the election and proclamation of the President or Vice President."

Electoral tribunal

By invoking this section, the petitioners are "actually asking" the high court to convene itself into a Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET), Mendoza said.

But Tarmor yesterday said that the Constitution gave the high court the power to decide on the case, citing Section 1, Article 8.

"Judicial power includes the duty of the courts of justice to settle actual controversies involving rights which are legally demandable and enforceable, and to determine whether or not there has been a grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction on the part of any branch or instrumentality," Tarmor said, quoting the Constitution.

Because the Commission on Elections has the power to decide on all election cases "from beginning to end of election" and because the high court can decide on the validity of government actions such as the Comelec's dismissal of the disqualification case, therefore it has the jurisdiction to make a ruling even before the May 10 elections and without convening itself as a PET," she said.

End of the matter

But opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara, who is supporting Poe, took the view of Poe's lawyers, saying he believes the high court would dismiss the case filed by Fornier because "the question of qualification of a candidate is exclusively vested with the Commission on Elections."

"And the [Comelec] decided unanimously in no two levels—division and en banc [to dismiss the petition of Fornier]. I think [let's] the end of the matter prior to election," Angara told reporters. "If the issue is raised after the elections and after Poe wins, then the Supreme Court would have jurisdiction on [the case]."

Fornier claimed that Poe was not a natural-born Filipino and could not run for president because he was born to an American mother before she renewed Poe's father in 1968. Former said Poe as an illegitimate child took the citizenship of his mother.

Technicality

Angara said the high court was free to proceed to answer the question on who has jurisdiction over Poe's disqualification case.

"I think the Supreme Court will leave the matter to the people to decide (rather than) knock out a candidate ... a major candidate at that—on a technicality," Angara said.

He noted that the disqualification issue had been taken up by the Senate Electoral Tribunal (SET) in previous cases, which found that the documents of Senator had been fabricated by ex-Senator Juan Ponce Enrile Ricardo Manapat.

Like Tarmor, Senate President Franklin Drilon said the high court could decide on the disqualification case against Poe.

Power of review

"The SC has jurisdiction over the citizenship case of FPJ [Poe] because it has the power in review decisions of the Comelec," he told reporters.

He said the Comelec ruled on the qualification of Poe as a candidate and thereby decision could be reviewed by the high court.

"The Comelec's resolution is not the final word on the issue," he said, noting that the Constitution provides authority to the Supreme Court to "review decisions of the collaborative and quasi-judicial agencies of government."

Drilon urged the high court to resolve the issue within 30 days. "So the earlier the decision is rendered, the better for the entire country," he said.

Angara also expressed the hope that the high court would decide "very quickly," saying that "as long as this controversy remains the more instability it will cause the political system."

Erap twits Ping over show biz

Front page A1

A convicted actor at his peak, and presidential aspirant Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson decided not to find his campaign with obscene his career probably because "wala silang malaking [he couldn't get any stars]."

The comment would have stunned Kontikoy if not for the fact that Estrada, who knows his rapport behind bar friend Fernando Poe Jr., earlier tried to rally Lacson into dropping out of the race to ensure the opposition's victory in the May polls. Lacson, standard-bearer of the Lakas ng Kristiyano-Kilusang Filipino, was Estrada's ranking police chief.

Poe, the "King of Philippine Movies," campaigned for his "kuya" when the latter was out for poor his mayor, senator, vice president and, finally, president.

Estrada called up the bureau last Wednesday night to defend Presidential Manager Arroyo's claim that she was done more for the movie industry than he ever did—and ended up defending FPJ's heavy reliance on entertainers, especially marked during the first salvo of the campaign on Tuesday.

Volunteers

"Bisaya yang mga 'to. Sinabi ko [Estrada said, assuring that the star-studded kickoff rally at the Camelo Interchange in Santa City was definitely not, as critics charged, "show lay-nothill".

Estrada said the actors, actresses and comedians who turned up at Poe's pro-media [rain on Tuesday were "volunteers," unlike the entertainers at President Macapagal-Arroyo's rally in Laguna. "Mga taporan 'yan [they were paid]," he scoffed, "sponsored by [television network] ABS-CBN."

The performers during the administration's opening blitz at the National Arts Center in Los Baños, Laguna, were brought there by Vice Entertainment's big boss. We did bounce, and headlined by the sexy-dancing Sirsi-Ini Rubio.

Did things quietly

Returning to the matter at hand, Estrada demanded: "Ha, sally what did [Mr. Manapat] do for the movie people?" He insisted that he, and not this, was the hero in this department, although he never showed his pit-cards before.

"I did things quietly," Estrada said. He reminded the Inquirer that he helped establish the Metro Manila Film Festival, and that he "consistently worked" for the movie Yearterminus as president of the Philippine Movie Producers Association, as well as for the small members of the industry as founder of the Movie Workers Welfare Foundation.

In Los Baños, Ms Marapa pal signed Republic Act No. 9229 or the Optical Media Bill, overpowering the Videogram Regulatory Board. Estrada was not expected to say the least: "Give a always just after publicity."

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Biazon calls Roco a liar

Front page A1

Sen. Ruffy Biazon said two personal running mates had asked him for money—one wanted tens of millions of pesos, and the other, hundreds of millions of pesos.

"I don't want to mention names but they know who they are," Biazon told reporters after attending the anniversary celebration of Bulaqueños City in North Cotabato.

"We were not even talking of money to take care of campaign expenses. These were just for their personal consumption," Biazon said after he addressed some 5,000 people gathered at the Bulaqueños gymnasium.

Biazon said Bayani Fernando Jr., Metro Manila Development Authority chair, was not one of the two politicians who had asked him for money. "In fact, he even asked me how much he would have to spend if he made a bid for the vice presidency."

Libel

Biazon said he was talking to his lawyers about the possibility of filing a libel case against Roco.

In case Biazon files a libel suit against Roco, Senate President Franklin Drilon, chair of the Lakas-NUP Party to which Biazon now belongs, said he was "willing to appear as witness and support his allegations because I know the truth."

Drilon said he was the one who recruited Biazon into the Lakas-NUP when the party had not yet decided to support Ms Macapagal, one of the six presidential candidates in the May elections.

"When the LP finally decided on Jan. 3 that we will support President Macapagal-Arroyo, I personally summoned Senator Biazon to be the second nominee of the LP in the coalition party," Drilon said at a separate news conference in the Senate.

"So there is absolutely no truth to the allegation that Senator Biazon received P20 million in campaign funds for joining the K-4 coalition," he said.

Not worried

But Biazon stood by his claim. At a news briefing in Legazpi City, Biazon said it was Biazon himself who relayed the information to him.

"He was the one who called me and said that he had been offered P50 million. He also said he refused, and I said that he did not accept (the bribe). Then I was asked if he accepted (it) later on, I said, 'I don't know, you better ask him,'" Biazon said.

He said he was not worried (about Biazon's claims) as he has for libel because what he said was the truth. "Truth is a defense in (libel)," he said.

Biazon said he did not volunteer the information during a dinner with the Inquirer chief executives, editors and reporters on Monday night. At the time, Biazon was reluctant to reveal what he and Biazon talked about until an editor prevailed upon him to do so.

"Here, I guess that should end there because I never said (that), and the article in the Inquirer never said that I said (that he accepted P50 million)," Roco said.

Five points

At his news conference, Biazon said he was forced to speak out because of the serious allegations against him.

He said he left Roco's alliance because he did not see how it could support his five points of advocacies (reforms in the domestic Peace, reviews of the Visiting Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, housing, creation of a P10-billion cooperative capital development fund, and reproductive health).

"I joined the Liberal Party because I like the ideology of the Liberals and they promised they would support my five points of advocacy," Biazon said.

Personality differences

He said there was another reason he decided to leave Roco's alliance but he did not want to elaborate on this. Rather, Biazon had said there were personality differences.

Biazon could be told Roco on the phone that he was joining the LP. He said he left Pag-asa "without rancor in my heart."

He reiterated several times that he did not want to "shoot" to the level of his detractors because he would rather stick to issues than engage in personal attacks.

But sometimes he couldn't hold back his emotions. Biazon, for instance, said there were big questions about Roco and his alliance.

"Why can't (Pag-asa) complete its announced lineup? Why (is it that) none of the six governors of Bicol (Roco's political turf) are running for Roco?" he said in Tagalog. "These are just questions. I did not say personality defects."

'Factory defect'

Biazon took exception to Roco's statement that he was a "factory defect" of the Philippine Military Academy where he graduated, saying that he had defended the Constitution and the people many times.

Biazon, a former AFP chief of staff, defended the Aquino administration against coup attempts.

He said he would not allow himself to be thrown in the mud where his detractors were, but if forced to throw mud, he said he had more mud against Roco.

Sensitive

Roco said that if Biazon "felt offended by this—there's absolutely nothing wrong with what I've stated—(and) it is that sensitive, (you understand why he is sensitive."

Roco admitted Biazon had asked his permission to join the Liberal Party. "I'm sure also, he said he would join the Liberal and when it would go, there he would go. That the chairperson emeritus of the Liberal Party is Gloria so we know that."

The presidential candidate said he did not realize a big loss were Biazon's defection to the administration coalition. "And I am not saying anything about him, but when I was asked by the (reporters) editors, you could tell a lie. So I said the truth. Why it be (said)?"

Roco maintained that he was "technically shook for two to three days" about Biazon's decision, "but now I believe."

UP BLAIRITE in Binangonan, Rizal, President Macapagal and her vice presidential candidate, Noli de Castro, abetted by former Bicol Gov. Casimiro Ysiano are on a campaign offensive.

HEAVY rains do not dampen the smiles of presidential hopeful Sen. Panfilo Lacson in Digos City. Davao del Sur, on Thursday. He's on the second day of his three-day swing through the Davao provinces.

Cory donates her painting . . .

Front page A1

in Makati City yesterday. The garden landscape, rendered on 4'x4'4" canvas, was fetched last Thursday.

DECF treasurer Carlos Dominguez, who was agriculture secretary during Aquino's term, said it cost up to P1 million to raise an eagle to maturity at age five or six years.

Aquino said she hoped her gesture would draw more private donors to the cause at hand and ultimately cause patriotic fervor in addressing perennial concerns in environmental conservation.

"This is what I've been advocating especially [among] big corporations," she said, and then sadly noted: "Everybody talks about corporate social responsibility [but] I feel that we Filipinos are not as enthusiastic as our neighbors."

People Power people

The key figure in the uprising that toppled the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, Aquino credited the PEF among premier "People Power people—because they are doing this for love of country."

She earned the label last year in launching an annual tribute to non-profit groups or projects that uplifted marginalized sectors despite scant government support.

Set up in 1987, the PEF runs the Forerunner Philippine Eagle Center in Malagos, Davao City. The sanctuary made world headlines in 1992 when it hatched its first eaglet Pag-asa (Hope) and Hagkalalan (Unity) in 1995. Today, it is home to 31 Philippine eagles, 15 of them bred in captivity.

There are an estimated 500 pairs of Philippine eagles in the wild, scattered mostly in Luzon, Samar, Leyte and Mindanao.

Surviving largely on foreign grants and corporate sponsorships, the foundation has expanded its work in conducting community-based livelihood programs.

Formerly called "monkey-eating eagle," the country's national bird has been the subject of conservation efforts since the mid-'60s, when Filipino scientist Dioscoro Rabor raised the alarm over the species' fast-diminishing numbers.

But it took Americans—the legendary aviator Charles Lindbergh and, later, Peace Corps volunteers led by Gideon S. Kennedy—to actualize the campaign up till the late '70s.

World's tallest

To minimize exposure on some text to the eagles, the center raises its own rabbits and guinea pigs, Dominguez said.

Once fully developed, the species *Pithecophaga jefferyi* can live up to 30 years. The species is prized for being the "tallest" eagle in the world, Dominguez added.

It's also so powerful that it can crush a human skull with its talons, according to PEF president Carlos Bolinao.

But for all its ferocity, Bolinao said, this "noble hunter" has one fatally innocent vulnerability: only one mate "for life."

That bit of trivia brought a smile to Aquino's face.

National treasure

"Providing for the eagle as a national treasure is really more about preserving its habitat," Pedrosa explained.

"It depends on the rainforest for its coexistence. It serves as a barometer: when you see that the eagle is gone, it means that the rainforest is going."

Also present at yesterday's turnover ceremony was PEF trustee and former vice chief Bellmore Bonifacio.

Aquino expressed the intent to help PEF during her visit to the Malagos sanctuary on Jan. 16.

'Wish Ko Lang' has new host in Vicky Morales

Bernadette Sembrano in similar show on ABS

By Jocelyn Valle
Core Buzz

STARTING tomorrow, GMA 7's "Wish Ko Lang" will have a new fairy godmother.

Vicky Morales takes over the role of granting lucky viewers' wishes from fellow broadcaster Bernadette Sembrano.

But as early as December last year, the move has already hurt Bernadette.

"We knew and felt that Bernadette's heart was with 'Pedro' more than with 'Wish,'" said Mickey Laguardia, the show's executive producer.

"She was inclined to leave with Pedro. Of course, we were still hoping that she would stay with us. She was claiming that she, and I suppose (her ate, was happy (with 'Wish'). But she made a decision (her ate'd move with 'Pedro.' Right away, we decided to call Vicky also last December.

At that time, "Pedro" was in a deadlock with GMA 7, after the station delayed for a week the investigative program's exposé on Pagcor.

Bernadette was also suspended by the GMA 7's News and Public Affairs for reporting in the announcement of the delays on the news program, "Saksi," by walking out while the news program's credits were still running and the star still on cam. Bernadette had been filling in for Vicky then.

Before 2003 ended, the award-winning "The Probe Team" ended its decade-long relationship with the GMA 7.

MORALES: Only one right to make a decision

The staff and crew of "Wish Ko Lang" were then hoping for Europe to tape episodes for their supposed Christmas special, Sagunto reasoned to Inquirer Entertainment last Tuesday.

"Bernadette was supposed to go with us," he said. "What happened was...she told us that she couldn't go with us because she was hav-

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Ailing death con hauled back to Bilibid

LUMAWIG

By Philip Tubeza, Tina Santos and Joyce Rimbo

MUNTINLUPA prison officials, citing death-convict Antolin Lumawig on Wednesday night was taken out of the National Kidney and Transplant Institute and handed back to the National Bilibid Prisons, according to the inmate's lawyers.

The Supreme Court has pursued on the NKTI's motion ordering Lumawig's transfer, when prison officials came knocking at the kidney institute at around 10 p.m. Wednesday, according to Lumawig's lawyer, Solomon Sarmiento Jr.

Lawyer Roberto B. Sangalang, chief legal officer of the Bureau of Corrections, led the team that took the ailing convict into custody on orders of Director-B. Santiago, the first director, Santos said.

Lumawig's lawyer in a statement described the prison officials as "hoodlum-like" when they brazenly disregarded the rule of law, civility and decency by taking a sick man into custody without the proper court order.

Leaking vessel

Sangalang said during an interview that they had indeed filed a motion for Lumawig's transfer, but added that the court motion was not really necessary.

"We do not need a document because, in the first place, the order was for Lumawig to be taken to the NKTI to be restored," Sangalang said. "And since the doctors had already said he is fit for discharge, it was up to the director or the superintendent to say he should be brought back here."

Sangalang said the only reason for the delay in transfer was because the room where Lumawig would be confined in had a leaking roof that had to be fixed.

Lumawig is now placed in isolation at the NBP hospital upon the advice of NKTI doctors.

Sangalang said Lumawig was taken into custody in the presence of his lawyer, his wife and three children.

Lumawig, locked back at the Bicutan stockade, saying that he had already lodged a protest in writing and submitted it to Sangalang, "who acknowledged it."

"The transfer is made even more contemptuous as it was led by a lawyer's affiant of the court's ruling, on Feb. 3, filed on behalf of Bañez an urgent motion with the Supreme Court for an order to authorize the transfer but which has not yet been acted upon, as far as we know," Sarmiento said, referring to Sangalang.

Fit for discharge

Santos said that the NBP team went to the hospital at night, "until after office hours, so there would be no recourse to the courts."

"Dinatnan ng I refused the presence of Lumawig's wife that the transfer, if it could not be avoided, be done material the following morning, after a night's rest and in broad daylight for the safety of all concerned," Santos said.

He said that the transfer was made based on the recommendation of NKTI Director Dr. Enrique T. Ona, who informed the NBP that Lumawig "is now fit for discharge" and that all "his needs in regular follow-up at DRTC/Lung Care Patient Services after his transfer to your hospital."

But Benito said that Ona is not one of Lumawig's doctors, one of whom said that he needs a special room where he can safely continue his post-transplant recovery.

Benito said Lumawig's doctor found that the conditions at the NBP hospital did not fit the bill.

Antiseptic room

In a recent interview, Ona explained that, ordinarily, a patient who has had a kidney transplant needs to stay in the hospital for seven to 12 days.

Ona added that the doctors at the NBP hospital assured him that the "special antiseptic room" is clean and reasonable enough to accommodate post-transplant patients like Lumawig.

"We have here our backs long enough for Lumawig," Ona said, adding that the NKTI has not enough rooms to accommodate other kidney transplant patients.

Four patients

Ona also said that they have several patients who are "poor and without living conditions were worse than Lumawig."

Lumawig was one of five men convicted for the 1990 killing of Col. Rolando Abe-Ella.

They are appealing their conviction before the Supreme Court.

Lumawig had been confined in the NKTI for more than a year, following an organ transplant.

NBI men not about to take Saycon accuser seriously

By Lala Salcedo

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation is not about to take seriously the man who claimed to have interviewed Rumor "Boy" Saycon and implicated the civil society leader in the Oakwood mutiny and a grand plot to destabilize the government.

According to Marianito Roque, president of the Integrity Special Task Force, the NBI first would have to evaluate the affidavit of Benjie Peralta before considering asking him on as a witness in the Saycon-Philippine investigation.

Alleged military enlistees of the group Guard Filipino held a press conference a few weeks ago, where they accused President Macapagal-Arroyo of ordering the military to spread her truth.

Saycon had been tagged the mastermind of the plot.

But according to Saycon, Roque's statement is nothing more than a fabrication.

Saycon said he had never granted an interview with Peralta and pointed out that the Philippine National Police earlier had disregarded the charges Peralta had hurled against him.

"That guy (Peralta) is future shopping," Saycon said.

Should the NBI take on Peralta as a witness, Saycon said it would mean the bureau is stooping to a very low level to pin him down.

"That would be very shameful for the NBI," he said.

Saycon also said that his participation in the Nasud Filipino conference should not be misconstrued as an attempt to destabilize the government.

He added that Peralta is not even an employee of any newspaper as he had claimed.

When Peralta introduced himself to the NBI, he claimed to belong to the Nation Broadcasting Corporation and the INC Philippine group. The NBI has confirmed that he is a subordinate to one of the mid-companies.

Last November, Peralta admitted a five-page affidavit to the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, where he accused Saycon, ex-secretary general of the Council on Philippine Affairs, of planning to overthrow the Macapagal administration by peaceful means and install a revolutionary government.

Peralta said Saycon planned to replace Ilo Mayuga of with Vice President Teofisto Guingona or Senator Sergio Osmeña.

He said that Saycon had ordered to him that Cops is part of a larger group that is out to overthrow the government.

CRIME OF PASSION
Responding to report of an abduction, policemen accost a red Honda Civic along Pedro Gil in Manila. It turns out that the woman in the car was "abducted" by her lover (left background) due to a spat.

Bets urged to sort out sorties with LGUs

By Edmund Tolabing, Jr.

DON'T be there to the last to know.

Police and local Commission on Elections officials yesterday called on stalwarts of candidates on their sorties with local officials before storming cities and massive politico begging for votes.

This came after the local officials were here the rallies and motorcades of national candidates during the first few days of the campaign period marked traffic and caused chaos in several areas.

National Capital Region Police Office Director Reynaldo De Leon yesterday told the incumbents that the competing parties should first coordinate with the local police and Comelec office of the cities or municipalities they plan to visit.

He said this would prevent traffic jams and any untoward incident during the sorties so the police would have enough time to prepare.

Preparations would include possible traffic rerouting to ensure smooth and convenient vehicular flow.

De Leon added that the NCRPO is ready to provide security to all the parties to ensure the safety of the candidates and their supporters.

"But they should give us proper advice," De Leon said.

Malabon City elections official Noel Villamor Igos said it was the responsibility of candidates to see to it that their campaign plans with local Comelec officers.

End of long and winding Makati roadwork seen

By Margaux Diño

THE END is near—that is, for the road construction project on Chino Roces Avenue (formerly Pasong Tamo).

Antonio Santamaria, director of the Metro Manila Urban Transport Integration Project (MMUTIP), said that the project is 87 percent complete as of mid-of January.

"The project contractor has committed to finish all major road construction-run works here now," Antonio said during a phone interview.

D.E. Builders had initially promised to finish major parts of the project by Feb. 15. But they missed the deadline due to "technical problems," he added.

Santamaria said they have finished with the roadwork from Pasay Road to Nitz-Cruz Intersection.

But he added that only one lane is passable from Nitz-Cruz Intersection to J.P. Rizal, because of "minor work activities" in the area.

"We are positive that we will beat the March 7 deadline in the completion of this road project," Santamaria said.

WORK crews rush to complete the construction of the last stretch of Chino Roces Avenue leading to J.P. Rizal Street in Makati City.

WIDOWS (from left) Zenaida Santos, Rebecca Lopez, Marilou de los Santos and Lilibeth Dawa show photographs of alleged torture marks on the bodies of their husbands during a media presentation Thursday (Joey Alcazaren)

BONNET GANG

CHR sees summary killing

By Tina Santos

FORENSIC experts of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) have found signs of torture on the bodies of six alleged bishop-and-robbery suspects slain in an alleged shootout in Manila in December.

Dr. Jessie Bey Uriel, CHR forensic and medical division manager, said he already recommended a comprehensive investigation after the suspects' bodies showed injuries other than those resulting from a shootout.

The injuries, Uriel said, indicated that the slain suspects could have been tortured their community executed.

"Most of the gunshot wounds entered the back," the CHR forensics expert said.

He also noted contusions on their bodies, abrasions in their wrists and cuts in their fingertips which they could not have suffered in a gun battle.

Yesterday, the widows of four of the suspects appealed to President Macapagal-Arroyo to help them seek justice.

Ironically, Mr Macapagal had lauded members of the Western Police District who killed the six men when they described as members of the notorious "Bonnet Gang."

The widows claimed that their husbands were sacrificed to justify the wrong up of police checkpoints in Metro Manila.

The checkpoints were part of the government's anti-crime efforts.

Lilibeth Dawa, Marilou de los Santos, Rebecca Lopez and Zenaida Bonifacio vehemently denied that their husbands were criminals.

Their husbands were among six men gunned down along Presidente Sergio Osmeña Jr. Highway (formerly South Super Highway) last Dec. 2.

Five of the six fatalities have been identified as Cesando Lavoa, 51, a retired Marine sergeant from Nueva Ecija; Romeo de los Santos, 37, a driver from Welfareville compound, Mandaluyong; Rodolfo Ostan, 48, a fire'let guide from Nueva Ecija; Geronimo Lopez, 42, a Nueva Ecija native and a Mandaluyong resident; and Edgar Bonifacio, 48, a native of Jaro, Ilo-ilo and believed to be a member of the Rebolusyonaryong Mymuuong Mulalayan.

LRTA workers lose P2.6 M in QC rob

By Tina Santos

FIVE heavily armed men netted away P2.6 million in payroll for the employees of the Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) in a midday robbery in Quezon City yesterday.

According to the Central Police District Office (CPDO), the suspects took the money from two LRTA employees who were transporting the money between banks in Makati City and Quezon City.

Supt. Rudy Isreno said that prior to the robbery, LRTA cashier Patricia Quinsaat and driver Reynaldo Antonio Ollimao withdrew the from a branch of the Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation in Makati.

They had the money changed to pesos in Manila before proceeding to Quezon City, where they were supposed to deposit it in another bank.

While in transit at about 1 p.m., however, a heavily tinted Mitsubishi Adventure without license plates blocked the path of their Mazda (WHY 385) at the corner of 9th Street and Broadway Centrum in New Manila.

The suspects, armed with high-powered firearms, jumped out of the van and grabbed the money at gunpoint from the LRTA employees.

According to the police, the money was supposed to go to the payroll of LRTA employees.

Kissing couples divert traffic

By Lala B. Salaverria

A KISS can be a powerful thing. And when 5,000 couples gather for the world's biggest kissing event, it can divert the flow of thousands of vehicles in a city like Manila.

That afternoon, traffic passing through Roxas Boulevard will be progressively rerouted for the Luneta-bound flow.

The event will attempt to break the record set by Chile on Jan. 13, when 4,447 couples kissed simultaneously for 10 seconds in the capital of Santiago.

Manila's kissathon will be held along Roxas Boulevard, centering at the Sapaolik, at midnight of Feb. 14, Valentine's Day.

For because of the expected influx of couples wishing to participate in the event, traffic will be rerouted starting 1 p.m. for vehicles passing through the northbound lane of Roxas Boulevard from T.M. Kalaw Street to Pres. Quirino Avenue.

At 7 p.m., its northbound and southbound lanes from P. Ocampo to T.M. Kalaw Streets will also be closed.

Vehicles coming from Cuneta would be made to turn right on Pres. Quirino Avenue, then left to Mabini Street or Taft Avenue to reach their destination.

Those coming from A. Bonifacio Drive or Port Area are advised to turn left to P. Burgos Street, then right to T.M. Kalaw Street and left at M.H. Del Pilar Street.

An alternative route for those coming from A. Bonifacio is to turn left at P. Burgos, straight to Finance Road, then right at Taft.

Vehicles coming from the Quezon, Jones and McArthur bridges would be made to go straight to Taft to reach their destination, while those coming from intersection would be made to take General Luna Street to Palacio Street, straight to Blk. Ocean Street, right on T.M. Kalaw Street then left to M.H. Del Pilar Street.

Trucks, trailers and vans from Ayala Boulevard and the Manila City Hall area will be allowed to proceed to the Port Area via P. Burgos and A. Bonifacio Drive.

Southbound vehicles going to Manila from the Daendels Highway are advised to turn left on Pres. Quirino, then right on Taft to reach their destination.

An alternative is for the vehicles to turn right on Pres. Quirino Avenue, turn left on Taft Avenue and then head straight to A.H. Lacson (Gen Fierbes) Avenue.

On Valentine's Day, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority traffic enforcers will extend their working hours to ensure smooth traffic around places expected to be patronized by those out to celebrate the "special day"

With a report from Rhargean Orchard Corbetvise Grella

Abba clones promise to sound, look like original Swedish group

By Marinel R. Cruz

ABBA: The Music is in Manila for a two-night concert, but Abba, the '70s band, is not.

Original band members of the Swedish group that popularized such hits as "Dancing Queen" and "Winner Takes It All" have been replaced by Abba "clones."

The phenomenon of replacing the originals with look-alike imitators first happened in the '80s, when a record called Beachcomers came here in Manila for a series of shows that featured four men who looked like the Fab 4 from Liverpool and played their music.

But members of Abba The Music said they won't "fit direct contact" with the management of the original Abba band. They claimed that they are the only Abba clones permitted to perform and look exactly like the real Swedish pop quartet.

Kenneth Fredriksson, the group's artistic manager, said the Abba impersonators, which is based in Stockholm, Sweden, auditioned the cast of Abba The Movie in the band's official name.

The band, however, admitted that none of the original Abba members—Bjorn Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson, Agnetha Faltskog and Anni-Frid Lyngstad—have seen their shows perform.

"They never give answers, because if they do, they get stabbed. So they send someone who works for their company to watch us," said Kenneth in a media gathering last Wednesday at On Deuce city Suite in Pasig City.

Abba The Music, composed of Katja Nord, Camilla Dahlin, Martin Rahnestrom and Johan Lofgren, will have shows on Feb. 13 at 8:00 p.m. at the Waterfront in Cebu City, and on Feb. 14 at 8:30 p.m. at the PSC Hivis in Pasig City.

During their two-night concert, Abba The Music will be performing along with some of the members of the original Abba back-up band.

"They said they enjoy playing with us because they feel that we are as much like the original," said Katja. "It's flattering. A lot of groups try to do Abba but I guess we body-dose them as good as we do."

Katja said it is very important for them to sing exactly how Abba had sung.

"There will be no dancing. We feel that we have this great responsibility to sound exactly like Abba," she said. "I guess the fact that we are from Sweden also helps. We have the right accent while singing."

According to Kenneth, the costumes that Abba The Music wear during their concerts were made to look exactly like the costumes the original Abba members wore.

"Even the hairstyles have the same color combination," he said.

Camilla and Katja are members of a group called Wheatlea, which was formed seven years ago. They are veterans of a talent search in Sweden called "Ready for the Dance."

"It's a very popular TV show where you dress up and act like a famous person," explained Martin. "The girls did Abba and they won."

Before forming Abba The Music three years ago, Camilla and Katja were back-up vocalists to several pop stars in Sweden. Katja said they also recorded a children's album a few years ago.

Camilla was 11 years old when she appeared in the music video of "Dancin' Days" for the Mamas," according to Katja. "She was there singing with the real Abba."

She and Camilla have been listening to Abba's music since they were 9 years old, Camilla said.

"The Abba is out idol. It's no secret for us to sing their songs because these songs are close to our heart," she added.

On Valentine's Day, Abba The Music will try to look and sound like the original Abba in songs like "Thank You for the Music," "Knowing Me, Knowing You," "Fernando," "Take At Chance On Me," "Chiquitita," "The Name of the Game" among others.

Performing with them are Pinky Marquez and Jimbo Gotauco.

"Expect an hour-long great performance on here," said Martin. "But most importantly Abba's music is still very popular here in the Philippines. We will try to give a performance that is as identical to Abba's as possible."

If only for the music, Abba The Music might be worth watching.

ABBA clones Katja Nord (right) and Camilla Dahlin arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport on Wednesday for two shows in the country. NOEL PABALATE

'Simpsons' The Movie now in the works

LOS ANGELES—Homer, that's not the easy out of the hit animated television series "The Simpsons" could finally become Hollywood stars, with plans for a big-screen version of their antics in the offing.

The industry press said Wednesday the creators of the show, now in its 15th year and poised to become the longest-running sitcom in US history next year, were working on a "Simpsons" feature film for Twentieth Century Fox studios.

Writers and creators Matt Groening and James Brooks are leading a team of writers in developing a full-length screenplay while the studio has already inked key writers, Daily Variety said.

Twentieth Century Fox, owned by Rupert Murdoch, whose fledgling cable channel runs the "Simpsons" reruns, said it was "very excited about the possibility of making a 'Simpsons' movie."

"However we are in the very early stages of developing an idea for the movie," said the studio's animation chief, Chris Meledandri.

Variety said that at least seven past and present writers of "The Simpsons" were involved in the movie.

Plans for a big-screen feature version of the globally syndicated "Simpsons" have been talked about in Hollywood for more than a decade, but Groening and his team have always very carefully shied away exploiting the super-successful franchise, Variety said.

One of the show's writers, Mike Reiss, told DVDMovieGuide.com that the final impetus for Launching the world's most famous animated dysfunctional family onto the silver screen came from the studio.

"They've wanted to do the show-as-a-movie idea. It's been 15 years of wanting to do the 'Simpsons' movie," Reiss said.

"Finally Fox said, 'Let's just do it!' We never had the greatest idea (but) was compelling, but Fox said, 'Maybe if we start paying you, you'll get inspired.' And sure enough, it worked!"

Reiss says until no release schedule had yet been set for the planned movie but that it was likely to be at least two years before it enters movie theaters.

In more than 300 episodes have been broadcast since 1989, including one infamous episode portraying adoption and poverty in Brazil that prompted a protest from the city of Rio de Janeiro, which threatened to sue.

Other hubs have included cultural and religious jabs, political jibes, pokes at industrialists and outright capitalism, swipes at top sports personalities and more than the occasional attack on the Fox-ish, take-over network that broadcasts it, which once (mistakenly) lit the size of the show's characters. AFP

Willie Nep serves politics for Valentine's Day dinner

FORMER president Joseph Estrada tried to keep comedian Willie Nepomuceno from impersonating him, but the comedian was undeterred.

Willie said he simply changed his shoulder and started an attack rather than boos—as many popular people like the deposed president.

"Deep, said he didn't want people to make fun of him. I told him my guys sing sipa friends do as lumpo. He said he didn't like how I poked fun at him," Willie said of the deposed president, who was then mayor at the time of the incident. "I told him he shouldn't be too sensitive because he's a public figure.

"In a way, other people learn more about Erap through me so I didn't stop," Willie told Inquirer Entertainment. "I can't remember how the talk ended but I never heard a complaint from him again. I guess Erap appreciated my work."

Willie, who is semi-wrinkly in the sitcom "Lapop" on ABC 5, prides himself of having a distinguished and respectful impression after.

"It's a job. But my impersonations are not here just to mock. We have a responsibility as our audience," he said.

But just like any other actor, having an impersonation has its risks, according to Willie. The comedian recounted the time when action star Robin Padilla threatened to file a libel suit against him in 1995.

Padilla was rumored to be illegal possession of firearms and ammunition and was sentenced to 17 to 21 years in 1995. The court granted him conditional pardon in 1998.

"Robin really wasn't about my jokes, but how I portrayed him. I came up the stage with my hands bound by cuffs," Willie recalled. "Fortunately, Lawyer and former TV host Joe Quirino, who was on Business like Robin, intervened. Everything was patched up, it got settled without me having to talk with Robin."

He said impersonators must be careful in what they say or do.

"Research on your subjects. Try to dig deeper into to show love to understand them more," Willie stressed. "Never talk about their physical deformities. You must at least be sensitive about that."

He considers next this is also why he does not impersonate women, except for former First Lady Imelda Marcos and former Commission on Elections Chair Haydee Yorac.

"I really studied the characters well," he said. "I was really very careful not to offend the women. I never use gimmicks well. I don't ridicule them."

Willie also impersonated former First Lady Amelita "Meng" Ramos, "but only for a commercial where I have scored of chocholate."

Fellow Eleazar Aquino was president, Willie tried to impersonate her someone to unveil.

Today at the life, as Manong people will get to see Willie impersonating presidential candidates Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, Raul Roco and Fernando Poe Jr. in a show titled, "Willie Nep for President, One Vote, Take All."

Joining Willie on stage are Ate Glow and rabbit impersonator Eugie Tamayo of "Ang Dr Kwapangilan" and "Kapuso Mga Kapatid" fame.

"This is a political thing," Willie said of his show. "I've always been a movie and tv political satire. The audience can expect some of the sappy love songs from other Valentine shows."

Marinel R. Cruz

WILLIE Nep: Impersonating people is just a job. But we have a responsibility as our audience.

'Wish Ko Lang' has new host

SEMBRANO

ing (the show). We needed someone to go with us, so Vicky went with us."

Bernadette's scenes with GMA 7 will end on Feb. 13. But her last episode for "Wish" was aired last Saturday.

An extra episode maybe have been about Bernadette running over the show to Vicky.

"But we decided to cancel it," said Esguerra. "It would have been better if she stuck out with Pesbe," which is in turn an extension of the GMA 7 family. But we learned that she was moving to ABS-CBN and would do a show similar to "Wish."

Bernadette promised to come over, says to Inquirer Entertainment that she would guest an interview "at the proper time."

The "Wish Ko Lang" fans to Esguerra," a special edition of the show, will be aired in March. Features will include the reunion of a father and a son in Paris, where the former has been living after they separated years ago, and a group of Filipino-Britons friends, who had followed thousands of toys to be distributed to their less fortunate countrymen in Metro Manila.

On Saturday, the stories will to voter around here.

Vicky and Esguerra, had always been in their minds even at the time they were corresponding the show.

"But at that time she was starting out with 'Ultimate' and she couldn't afford to have more than one. She just got married then, too," he explained.

When they offered "Wish" again to Vicky, she had been more receptive and decided to see right to decide.

"When I resumed my husband that our family remains to be my top priority he agreed right away," said Vicky.

"Personally, I felt that I was ready for another challenge. And 'Wish' was it."

There was no adjustment period between the staff and Bernadette, "She immediately blended with everybody," said Esguerra. "Her personality will definitely mold the show. Her advocacy or missing persons will give the show a different approach. The show will also target the development of Vicky's own wish, that is for her and his husband to finally have a child."

Café de Malate celebrates Year of the Monkey

Café de Malate celebrates the Year of the Monkey with special shows featuring several performers.

Apple Almalguan sings every Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday, it's Cindy Sioson's turn to supplement the crowd with her repertoire of pop-and-standard songs.

Gem Ramos gets everybody to dance on Thursdays. Nina Sanchez and Jennie Hong perform back to back on Fridays.

Café de Malate on Malate Epifanio Street in Malate offers 50-percent discount during happy hour on Saturdays.

A favorite watering hole that has survived the trends of comedy clubs and gay bistros, Café de Malate has become a Manila institution catering to the after-work crowd in the city. Simple but sumptuous food and superb service are the other main attractions of the place.

Kuh opens Hacienda Isabella for V-day

SOSA Ledesma's Hacienda Isabella—a property in Tagaytay which the pop diva plans to develop into a country club—will be open for Valentine's Day.

Couples who want something del. Forget Cather than the usual concert and dinner—can live off to Hacienda Isabella for a country dinner under the stars on Feb. 14.

Only an hour and a half away from Manila, Hacienda Isabella was originally intended by Kuh to be a retreat house and a bed-and-breakfast getaway for board city dwellers. Recently, she decided to open it to the public for weddings, debuts, birthday parties and other such gatherings.

"The place is so beautiful, I wanted to share it with the public," says the pop diva who named the place after her only daughter.

Hacienda Isabella is also envisioned to be a performance venue. On March 20, Kuh will be staging a concert-play starred by Barbara Bonnamalli's "One Voice" show, which was held at Bonnamalli's former Malibu estate on Sept. 6, 1986. She will be joined by her daughter Isabella and up-and-coming singer Nathalie Hart, among others in twelve other artists to stage shows there.

The property consists of a main house and two pavilions. Other areas, which will include a swimming pool, a library, a game room and other amenities, are currently under construction.

For details, call Isabella Concepts at 551-7203 to 05.

SHOW TIME

SPORTS

Email: p_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Teddy C. Molondres
Assistant Editor Edwin H. Villanueva

BASKETBALL NBA Cavaliers at Spurs, Game 2002, 8:30 pm; Nets at Celtics, Game 2, 8:30 pm; Suns at Kings, Game 2, 10:30 pm—All live on Solar Sports TV (Cignal Digital Channel 8).

Ryan Bowen (6) and Jeff Foster (25) of the Indiana Pacers pile after landing the Miami Heat's Shaquille O'Neal during the third quarter of their NBA game in Indianapolis, Indiana, Tuesday. Bowen, who was suspended for the game, was the only member of the bench for the Pacers to leave the bench area during the fight. Bowen was suspended for leaving the bench area during the fight. Bowen was suspended for leaving the bench area during the fight. Bowen was suspended for leaving

Lipa back on bench with RP U-20 five

ABE Lipa is back with the national team.

After launching the Champion League last year, Lipa scours out of semi-retirement to serve the country anew as a coach of the RP 20-and-under team to the fourth Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) Young Men's championship set in September in Tehran, Iran.

"Basketball stays in my blood, it remains my passion. I see the Filipinos still love basketball, too, and I can proved and honored to coach our best and growing players," said Lipa.

A stickler for discipline and preparation, Lipa has called on "all available top players in the collegiate and amateur ranks" to join the tryouts starting Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and the ensuing sessions at the same venue from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday to Friday.

"We're hoping it to coach Joe Lipa to form a very competitive RP Team. We're confident that, with Lipa, we're going to have the most competitive squad in years," said BAP president Jumbo Jose "Tony" Liberal.

Lipa's impressive track record includes steering an amateur team composed of Dwight Ramos, Jerry Codiñera and Alvin Bartolome to a bronze-medal finish in the 1986 Asian Games in Seoul, Korea.

In his last stint of duty in 1995, he guided a team featuring Marlou Aquino and Bal David to the Southeast Asian Games title in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Before the Champions League, Lipa was the commissioner of the UAAP a position he accepted after leaving the Ateneo Eagles in 2002.

Lim: BAP can do it sans PBA help

By Jam Manano

THE PHILIPPINE Basketball Association could be trotting from and effort allowing its format to accommodate the national team into the league's schedule.

This developed as Graham Lim, secretary general of the Basketball Association of the Philippines, yesterday shot down the idea of giving the PBA a free hand in organizing the country's campaign in international meets like the ABC championship and the Asian Games.

"We are in the process of developing the country's basketball program for us to compete against powerhouse countries in the ABC and Asian Games," Lim told the business.

LIM: Pie Grande

"With the program already in place and the entry of an gold competitors to Gilbas in Decalibre, the BAP can stand on its own in both organizations," he added.

Since 1998, the PBA had taken care of funding and preparing the national team which competed in the Asian Games.

Last year, the PBA dumped the old three-conference format for a calendar that, among

(JUN 13)

Bad news for badminton

WHAT'S this I hear that badminton is not in the Manila SEA Games calendar next year? If true, no matter how he is a surprise as the presidential candidacy of Sen. Nikki Villanueva. First PUP.

Wag, tell me, it isn't true.

Badminton has become a event the rule of the globe. Badminton courts have sprouted nationwide like mushrooms. You see kids play the game all set week you, the next year, who knows, we could be producing world-caliber bad minton players already. First probable SEA Games champion in both the men and women division.

What could be the reason behind the move to remove badminton from the roster of next year's SEA Games event?

I can see one reason: We can't win the gold in this sport. Not next year. You can't become champion overnight.

The list is valid.

For one, the badminton, perennial title contenders in the SEA Games, are considered as "world-class" in badminton. For another, right now, we are not even among the Top 20 badminton players in the world.

The Indonesians have that reputation for ages. If basketball is our game, badminton is to the Indonesians.

After Hendra Lim, our 1996 Atlanta Olympian, I can't think of another Filipino badminton player as good as she is. I wish Monica could soon produce another "Hendrawan Phenom" to represent the country in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.)

The decision to exclude badminton, if true, would again resurrect the that ugly previous in the SEA Games charter allowing host countries to choose events they want played to the biennial meet.

It is ugly because if no event is not popular in the host country, the host country has the exclusive right to remove it from the Games calendar.

It happened again last year, when Vietnam scrapped golf and bowling because both events did not assure the hosts of gold medals. Golf and bowling being not popular in Vietnam, the host would deem one of the event. That did away several gold medals (takes) in both disciplines, which could have posed, to their local setting-ons, problems in their quest for a first ever overall victory. Set as things turned out, even the inclusion of golf and bowling could not have stopped the Vietnamese juggernaut from speeding to victory. The hosts are running away.

Sidet have a say of meeting out a winner, depending on how one sees them.

But again, ugly as the rule sounds, it's the rule. Everybody has to follow it. Yes, respect it. You can't go into the event and once you have landed a gold, or even a silver, bargain or otherwise your host's decision to scrap this or that sport just because you felt it had unfairly put you in a bad position to go for the overall title. No. That's being immature. Un-sportsmanlike even.

Anyway, we still have many more months to go before we host the 2005 SEA Games. That's alot of time to reconsider the decision to scrap badminton.

If only for the sake of the nation's burning romance with the game today, maybe it'll be worth our while to not make a final decision on this item. There's more time to think over it. Billie. No, no need to hurry. Have mulon wane, right?

And, yes, I have so much faith in Richie Garcia, the former PSC commissioner, who, I was told, heads the Philippine Olympic Committee side now studying which disciplines are to be included in the 2005 SEA Games. Maybe, you could update me on this, Richie?

Am just a text-tell many pastors

***

DATEBOOK. The magic of thrown did wonders again last Saturday, resulting in the stunning championship win of Bids in the Angels' seventh OSL Philippines Cup. Bids Alonso, LA. Tenorio, Pinoy Gonzales and Larry Fonacier, all from Ateneo, did the most damage in Bids's title-clinching victory over Welcoat that gave coach Jamel Revell his record-equaling seventh crown in the OSL. Carlito de Perio, Welcoat's ex-chief, was indeed as he almost had Ateneo players in his lineup each time he went, already. De Bids had pocketed three OSL titles with Blue Eagles...competing the core of his team. I wonder if he has acknowledged that at all. Meanwhile, for the PBA-bound Alvarez (Bids!) and Gonzales (Bolts), what a fitting goodbye to their amateur career. It was almost like a fairy-tale ending, particularly for Alonso, who seems to have it all: skills, talent and the luck to be at the right place and at the right time.

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• Sta. Cruz, Laguna: 3rd Floor, Sta. Cruz, Laguna. Tels. 911-0000/911-0000

RP cyclists . . .

From page A-29

Aniceto Germanes was the only RP rider who struggled home after figuring in a 33-man crash at the 44-km point.

Team Pagcor maintained its fourth place behind Japan, Iran and China.

Ingleby and Ingalla also held on to their 9th and 9th places, respectively, in the Asian individual category with team Cholo Michaels still on top.

The RP figures riders raised their personal totals in spite of troubleshooting or crash-inducing that were the order of the day during the long, lasting rain-

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SCOOP AWARDS

2003 best athletes feted again tonight

THE SPORTS Commentators Organization of the Philippines (SCOOP) holds tonight its own Annual Awards Night at the Ballroom Room of the Fontana Merrydia Specialty Restaurant at the Luneta.

Twenty-five athletes will be honored, led by the Athletes of the Year Awardee, world boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, who will be accorded a 22-inch Grand Pancho Villa Barrida Silver Cup.

The awards start at 7 p.m. with Manila Mayor Jose "Lito" Atienna as guest of honor and speaker.

SCOOP members, honorees and guests are requested to come early for registration, which starts at 5 p.m.

The complete list of awardees:

Samuel Panelo: Villa Barrida (Architect of the Year)—Mayor Peppito

Samuel Kahanayan (Dec. Outstanding Athlete Sportsmen)—Christian Jay Hualde, RP Throwers Team, Alvin Ting, Boxe Caviar, Recorded City-Jack Softball Team.

ATIENZA

Mark Penque, Marcus Vitta, Noel Ryan Rabaja, Willie Marquez and Dr. RP Traditional Boat Race Team.

Samuel Ba-ka-Landas (We Will/Kaya Mo—Traditional Inventor)—Efren de Buenaventa, Glenn Aguilar and Juan Carlos Miguel Mendoza.

Samuel Sinigang (Delicious Award)—Eugene Torre and Ronald Dulalia.

Samuel Kahatnan (Iron man/ Memorial Youth Award)—Jayvee Agnes, Rachelle Ann Cabral, Kenneth Ivan Andres and Marlyn Lendoveo.

Samuel Bilong Buhay (Lifetime Achievement Award)—Eduardo Gonzalez and Virgilio "Boby" Delgado.

Samuel Sahlestie (Sports Leadership Award)—Steve Hontiveros, Jun Robert Jaworski Jr., Eric Buhain, Calvin Abueva, Go Teng Kok, Hong Con, Arnold "Al" Antonio, Lydia de Vega-Mercado, Bert Lina, Gee Torres Jones, BL Tong Teal Sum and Herman Esguerra.

Samuel Kabiog Sa Friends of SCOOP—George Chua, Vicki Villavicencio and Mayor Jose "Lito" Atienza.

Seventeen more individuals whose achievements, leadership and support have contributed to the growth of Philippine sports will also be feted.

The Annual Awards Night is sponsored by Jun Miguel Cruz, the Philippine Sports Commission, Mayor Atienza and Provident Marketing, and supported by Activegirl 2000, the Philippine Basketball Association and the Philippine Basketball League.

THUNDERBIRD
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NSAs give Buhain deadline on funds

By Marc Anthony Reyes

LEADERS of grumbling national sports associations yesterday vowed to hold a protest rally if the Philippine Sports Commission doesn't start releasing their funds up or before March 15.

While they have yet to map out the protest, keys to elaborating taking for the removal of PSC chair Dick Buhain, majority of the 40 NSA heads said they would be forced to make drastic actions if nothing happens on their financial requests after the deadline.

Buhain himself set the March 15 deadline during his dialogue with the NSAs early in the week.

The PSC owes at least P15 million to the NSAs, which complained of non-payment of expenses as late as the 2002 Busan Asian Games.

The sports's delinquent funds to the NSAs for their development programs, including the athletes' foreign trips and tournament bookings. The PSC also takes care of the salaries of athletes and coaches recommended by their respective NSAs.

Jimmy Lim of bodybuilding said he was satisfied with Buhain's explanation during their dialogue last Monday where at least 22 NSA heads showed up, including those who have asked for Buhain's ouster.

"We have showed the PSC good faith in holding our protest," said Lim, "and we have no choice but to wait for March 15. Otherwise, we will be inconvenienced to make a move because we don't want to be taken for a ride."

Buhain managed to defuse the explosive issue of financial support by telling the NSAs to "expect some changes by next month."

"I told them that they can't expect anything this month," said Buhain. "But by March, some of the NSAs will start getting their (PSC) financial assistance."

Philippine Olympic Committee president Celso Jimenez, who has openly supported the anti-Buhain movement, earlier said the NSAs only have two major concerns that need to be addressed: hard cash and the impending reduction of the national athletes' pool.

Buhan didn't make any comment regarding the second problem although he promised to submit the PSC workforce, particularly the commissioners who have repeatedly gotten a 400-

Black does a Bayno . . .

(For coverage, PAGE)

signed coach, Aric del Rosario.

Heading the list are former Ateneo point guard Bayno Arroyo and Bonnel Poind, Pete Gindoy and Bel Rosario, who steered Ateneo UAP to a sniper-like 4-0 elimination finish in the recent PBL Philippine Cup.

Arroyo, Gindoy, Del Rosario's longtime assistant, is out of the picture due to his commitment with the Cebuana Lhuillier national squad.

Black is trying, in a very short time, to keep the Tigers on fighting form, despite a season lacking a legitimate homecourt following the good-bye of their 6,5 idiosyncratic Epeira.

"I really don't know the lesson yet. I have no idea who are the big men, but I'm willing to help," said Black. He was assisted by coaches Lester Bell-Isaacs and Allen Sayat.

Buddy Tan, UST team manager and general manager of Burlington, asked Black to help the Tigers.

Black is the main man behind the Burlington super-skills camp which will be held at the UST campus beginning March 1.

Hired by Toyotas as its scout for Asia, Black said that he's assisting the Burlington camps mainly to help, making it impossible for him to take over the coaching reins.

"It's very lucrative where I am now as a scout," said Black, whose do-or-die stance during his early years in the PBA made him very popular among local fans.

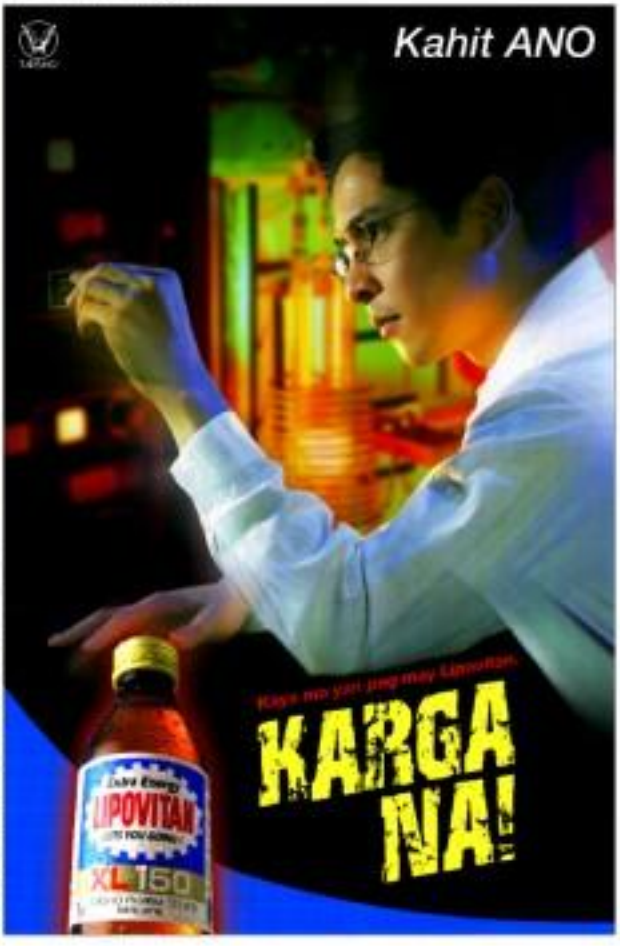
An immediate concern: said Black will be required on UST commitment in the training season.

Aside from coaching skills, Black is also expected to strengthen the mental resolve of the Tigers as they prepare to plunge into action in the tough UAAP season.

"I can't comment yet on how this team will fare this season. I understand that there is no official lineup yet. UST also is in the process of looking for a head coach," Black said.

Among those present were assistant coaches Clarence Lumagui, Jerral Vizconde and Rene de Guzman, who at 6-foot-5, battled 6-foot-7 giants in the championship game.

After the glory years of Gilas Bel-Air, Bal David, Chris Cantonjos, Dennis Ramos, Gido Baldivieso and others, UST was relegated to the shadows by the UAAP's emerging powers, namely La Salle, which displaced UST's dominion 1998-2001.



Buick gets Tiger on the prowl

LA JOLLA, California—Tiger Woods makes his return to the U.S. PGA Tour here Thursday, trying to defend his title at the $4.8 million Buick Invitational and fight off a host of challengers for his top ranking.

Woods concluded his break from the game by watching Stanford University's last second victory over rival Arizona last Saturday from a front-row seat. Woods hobbled off both from joining in crowd celebration.

"When the ball went in, I went nuts and Frank off to go jump on the pile, and I caught myself right around halftime and said, 'Sorry guy," said Woods, who played golf in Stanford from 1994 through 1996.

Woods has not played since the season-opening Tournament of Champions, but cannot afford to be crazy against such a rule as Fiji's Vijay Singh, who won the US PGA money title from Woods last year.

Singh is ranked second in the world to Woods and has 12 consecutive top-10 finishes, just miss off the US$10.26 million set by Jack Nicklaus in 1979.

"That's pretty impressive, isn't it?" Woods said.

"I think it's a fun time in golf right now because there are a lot of different challengers out there, and it's a lot of fun."

Woods has owned the top spot for more than 500 weeks. But Singh has won an idea to five for Woods since the 2000 Text Championship.

"Tiger top his shown that he can play not his best golf and still finish top 10," Phil Mickelson said. "When he plays his best golf, he's winning."

Singh downplayed his quest for the top ranking, saying he stopped paying attention two years ago when Woods was at the height of his dominance.

"No matter what we do, you weren't going to catch him," Singh said. "But [he's not showing down either. He's playing pretty good every time he tees it up."

During Woods' reign, he has denied challengers from No. 2 Mickelson, Singh, David Duval and Ernie Els.

"They've each taken their turn," said Woods, who became No. 1 in June 1997 and has held it since August 1999. "Everybody has their turn. Hopefully, the turn lasts a long time, but everyone has their turn in the sun when we all play well."

AFP

WOODS follows through on his practice tee shot on the eighth hole of the North Course at Torrey Pines Wednesday. AP

25 early teams in Uratex caddies roster

OVER 100 players from 25 teams coming from as far south as Davao City have registered so far for the P2-million Uratex Invitational Caddies Championship set Feb. 17-20 at the Executive course of the Valley Golf and Country Club in Antipolo.

"We expect a field of 70 clubs in the next few days," tournament committee co-chairmen Col. Abe Villanueva and Manding Santos said yesterday. "Other clubs still have time to sign up."

The 72-hole tournament, bankrolled by the Cheng family, caters handsome prizes in the form of golf certificates for the meet's individual and team winners and ladies' champion.

Valley president Manuel P. Quiogue said the executive course is ready. "We have prepared it for the past few months and the caddies will again find it very challenging," he said.

Registration centers are at Valley Intl. 656-6001 through Lanie Aycardo and National Golf Association of the Philippines (632-2187) through PGAP executive director Jake Ayson.

Among the early clubs in the registry are Davao City's Agro, Lemery and Palos Verdes, Bonifacio Golf Club in Pinoso, Manila Southwoods in Carmona, Cavite, and Mount Malarayat in Lipa City.

The traditional format for tomorrow Valley Training will be held this Monday followed by the blessing of the ceremonial drives the next day.

The late business tycoon Andrew Gotianun Sr. first started this unique tournament in 1988 to provide a national event for local caddies, develop their skills and discover talent from their ranks.

Inner Wheel golf up

HUNDREDS of players from around the country are expected on the first tee today when the Inner Wheel Clubs of the Philippines Inc., composed of wives of Rotarians, holds their 6th National President's Cup Golf Tournament at the Mahong Golf and Country Club.

Gloria "Baby" Ledesma, this year's National Conference chair, said the tournament kicks off the club's activities before its 50th National Convention in the Metro Manila Grand Ball Ballroom.

Sports chair Sofia Jamias and golf tournament head Susanne Que said they expect the tournament to build up friendship and camaraderie among members.

The golf fairer is from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The entry fee is P2,000.

Sponsors of this event are [illegible]

Sportswatch

Pagayo stuns Parra, reaches semis

ELISTA HICKLE veteran Josephine Pagayo upset fourth seed Michelle Parra (+5, 6-2, 6) Sarge into the singles semifinals of the 2004 Intercollegiate Women's Tennis Championship at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center. Pagayo, the 1999 World Cup gold tennis bronze medalist, displayed nerves of steel in the match point to end the 1 hour and 45 minute duel. The 5th Ranker then outlasted her victory and booked a last-four encounter with top-seed Tracy Santos, who posted by Ge Castro, 6-2, 6-4. The bottom half of the draw also witnessed with Czarina Mae Arevalo against No. 3 Ellen Zuleta in the marked encounter. Arevalo clanked upon groupie Nikki Salazar, 6-0, 6-3, while Zuleta ousted Sierra Rose Cruz, 6-0, 6-2.

Lhuillier reaffirms support for tennis

PHILIPPINE Davis Cup team manager Jose Henri Lhuillier says he will continue to support the country's tennis development efforts despite the national team's 4-1 defeat to China in the Asia-Oceania Zone Group II Davis Cup tie last week. Lhuillier said the 16-person Cup-bidding served as a learning experience for them and is confident they will be ready for future challenges and opportunities. "Our players have the skills and our boys played their best. I am proud to have been team manager of the team. We started slow, though, that the Chinese are the more fundamentally sound players," said Lhuillier. "There is no substitute for a long-term training program and international exposure." The Philippines salvaged a measure of pride when The country's No 1 Johnny Arcilla defeated Yeah Hongbo by default in the 3rd year by winning over Wen including a scores of the four-leg Cebuano Lhuillier Davis Cup. Arcilla was scheduled singles match against Li Zengxi. One of the showcases during the Cebuano Lhuillier Davis Cup tie was 40 year old Eric Gonzalez who made his first Davis Cup match training with the legendary Pat Cardona. Gonzalez lost in the 1st Rubber (6-0 2, 4-6 6-2, 6-4) to Li Hao Yang. The match will again be used by Cebuano as Lhuillier to further the Philippine Tennis Team.

Rodrigo off for Oriental title crack

WBO Oriental title standard against Mo. Philippine flyweight champion Edgie Rodrigo travels to enemy territory today in try to wrestle the Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation (OPBF) title in Nagoya, Japan's Aichi Prefecture. The southpaw Rodrigo (26 knockout 4 p.m. wins 3 no-decisions 4 losses) will encounter Japanese champion Ryuji Hiranuki at 4 p.m. Thursday (Manila time). Rodrigo (26-3-2, 4 KOs) is also coming off a bout with Mo. Rodrigo, 8 to the first fight for Hiranuki (15-0-2, 4 KOs) is also coming off a bout with Mo. Rodrigo after knocking out Carlos Z Gomez last year to win the WF flyweight crown. "Targeting Hiranuki is Rodrigo as boxer we do if Rodrigo is committed endorsing to this fight," said Rodrigo. "I will train hard for 12 by the Aichi Boxing Commission has 11 wins 6 KOs and four draws. Last year he knocked out Filipino Jimmy Pelly Lunas in just two rounds. But the General Santos City-raised Rodrigo said he's ready to take on Hiranuki. "I have prepared like never before for this fight," said Rodrigo. Edson C. Caguioa

Talusan headlines Sta. Maria bocfest

TARLAC boxers, featuring Southeast Asian Games gold medalist Ronny Talusan and three women's fights, mark the resumption of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (Abap) Ako Ay Kabataan program with the Sta. Maria Invitational today in Sta. Maria, Pangasinan. The bouts will be held at the town plaza in coincide with the celebration of the Sta. Maria town fiesta starting at 8 a.m. and will be aired on RPN-9 every Saturday at 9:15 p.m. 10:45 p.m. Talusan, campaigning in the light fly weight division, weights in the first bout with Lt Ayam Galaxo.

CHAMPION: Mauricio Fransisco Ramirez of the Sorrener's Bro Racing Team shares a light moment with father-in-law and legendary race driver Rodolfo Ramirez during the recent Goodyear Oivers Enduro at the Subic International Raceway. The 48-year-old rocker of three, who finished second in the rookie class and 6th overall, is sponsored by Sorrener's Dri, the 270-made feminine hygiene product.

All eyes on James in All-Star Challenge

CLEVELAND Cavaliers' young superstar LeBron James leads a team of fellow rookies in the 2004 "get wild" Rookie Challenge" during the NBA All-Star weekend against the Wizards' Kwame Brown. James' last-started is all the games he has played for the Cavs and averages 20.8 points, 5.5 rebounds and 5.8 assists a game. In games on Feb. 1 against the Washington Wizards, James scored a career high 29 points. After 40 games, he ranks No. 13 in the NBA in scoring (20.8 ppg), No. 10 in assists (6.1 apg) and leads the race for Rookie of the Year honors. For more information on James and the latest of basketball, log on to www.nbahomebase.com.

JAMES: Leads rookies team

Pasay 4-cocker under way tonight

BIG-TIME cockfighting action again goes starting at 7 tonight in the Pasay Cockpit Cockers Association (PCCA) 4-Cock Derby series at the air-conditioned Pasay City Cockpit. The 10-fight program is sponsored by Taguiaran Warriors Taguiaran Mills from Taguiaran IP left border and Taguiaran Commissioner Bill. The PCCA derby remains one of Pasay Cockpit's biggest crowd-drawers, according to cockmasters Oscar Gonzales, Orlando Rivera and Ramboy Ibana. Southeast 15, 12 and 10, the 3% million Challenge to Champions 7-Cock Derby will be presented by PCCA and is open to all members and bonafides for an entry fee of P15,000. Reservation for cockfights are fast-started and interested parties may call 831-8-6768, 843-73-96 and 843-5890. Meanwhile the PBDC 600-GFF 4-Cock Derby is open on Feb. 20 with the ANY Group of Laguna as host. Entry fee is P10,000.

Lim: BAP can do it . . .

Viewpoint, A-26

others, synchronized it with the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) to make room for the national team in future international competitions.

"In turn, we would ask them (PBA) to limit their players for the SEC or Asian Games, but we would strongly discourage the PBA from handing the affairs of the national team," said Lim.

But PBA Commissioner Noli Eala said the league would want nothing less than allowing maximum participation of the national team's superstars when it comes to the Asian Games or the SEC.

"It's sad if the PBA wouldn't be allowed to handle the national team. But if that's their (SBP) decision, we will abide by it, " said Eala.

"They are the recognized body of the Fiba in the country and the PBA respects that," he added.

Eala, however, stressed that everything is still up in the air since the BAP is in the thick of a power struggle against Sec. Juego's men.

"As soon as the problem between the BAP and Go Teng's is over, we will immediately sit down with the recognized body and talk about what the Fiba could offer to the national team," said Eala.

BUSINESS

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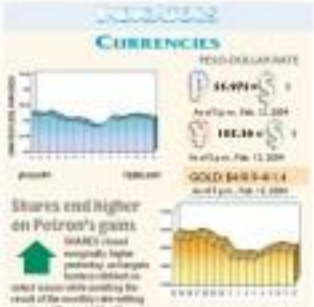
BSP keeps overnight rates unchanged



By Dennis S. Rubico

DESPITE the continued weakness of the peso, the policy-making Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday left its benchmark overnight interest rates unchanged.

The Monetary Board said there was no need to further tighten its monetary policy after watching off speculative against the peso by raising last week the reserve requirement imposed on banks.

Monetary authorities, however, warned that they might consider "other policy measures" to avoid adverse inflationary implications of a sharp and sustained depreciation of the peso in line with their responsibility to maintain price stability.

The BSP has not changed its overnight interest rates since July, as the low inflation last year reported its policy stance. The overnight borrowing rate was kept at 6.75 percent while the lending rate remained at 9 percent.

The peso yesterday closed at ₱55.955 to $1 from ₱56.005 last Wednesday.

The local currency remained weak even after monetary authorities raised the banks' reserve requirement on deposits and deposit substitutes last week by 2 percentage points to 19 percent. The hike in reserves unexpected to have siphoned off about ₱98 billion from the system, which could be used to buy dollars and speculate against the peso.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the supply of dollars this year could be boosted by increased dollar remittances particularly from overseas Filipino workers. The BSP said that in 2003, the dollar inflow from about 8 million overseas workers reached $7.6 billion as projected.

This year, OFW remittances were expected to hit at least $7.9 billion, according to the BSP chief.

In January, the net inflow of portfolio investments stood at $47.8 million, against only $19.8 million a year ago. In 2003, the net portfolio investments reached $876.4 million.

"What we have done today is not necessarily what we intend to do in the next six months. But can impose additional measures but we would rather not telegraph our plans to the market," according to the BSP chief.

Buenaventura said the Monetary Board believed that the current level of policy rates and reserves were sufficient to achieve the government's target of keeping the inflation rate between 4 and 5 percent this year while achieving an economic growth of at least 4.5 percent.

The central bank said it could raise overnight rates or increase more the banks' reserve requirement if the weakness of the local currency would persist.

The central bank is also determined to make use of stronger moral suasion on banks to make sure they toe the line.

Bankers said the local currency would stay volatile because the factors that have dragged the peso down in the first place, such as political uncertainties and a shortage of dollars in the spot market, have not been addressed.

As demand for dollars build up towards the end of the month, traders said the peso would again fall to 56.20 to even lower in the coming weeks.

Gov't to pursue merger of Finance, DBM, Neda

THE MACAPAGAL administration is planning to merge three important agencies of the government—the Department of Finance, Department of Budget Management and National Economic and Development Authority—to create one economic "super body."

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin confirmed yesterday the economic team had created a group that was tasked to study the merger of the three organizational departments in line with efforts to streamline government operations, reduce offices and cut costs.

Boncodin said that next year, when the government is expected to implement its program of rightsizing the bureaucracy, some 10,000 to 20,000 government workers who may be declared redundant.

The budget chief said the merger would allow the government to close redundant offices and relieve affected employees.

In the last three years, the Macapagal administration has sought to streamline the bureaucracy to reduce the number of government agencies and cut down on the number of employees.

Each of the three agencies has between 500 and 900 employees.

The budget chief said establishment agencies had supported the plan as it would help them downsize their bureaucracy.

Boncodin said these agencies were in support of the planned merger. Their employees, she said, had been complaining about the overlapping of certain functions.

The budget chief added the merger would allow the government to close redundant offices and relieve affected employees.

In the last three years, the Macapagal administration has been trying to implement an aggressive streamlining program. But the plan was stalled by the inability of Congress to draft a legislation that will provide additional retirement benefits to some 18,000 to 20,000 government workers who may be declared redundant.

The government had asked Congress to pass a law that would grant additional gratuities, benefits as additional half-a-month salary for every year of service on top of the monthly pension they would get from the Government Service Insurance System. Gloria S. Bautista

Intercon group puts up service center in RP

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group has invested $6 million in the Philippines to put up the biggest customer service center in the Asia Pacific region.

The Manila Customer Service Center, which started operations in October last year, attends to clients of IHG, one of the world's leading hotel service providers.

According to Patrick Imbardelli, IHG managing director for the Asia Pacific, the Manila Customer Service Center was established to service the growing number of clients of the company.

"Our chain already has 350 hotels in 20 countries in the region, and it is expecting to open several more hotels within the year, Imbardelli said.

Imbardelli said the new hotels are meant to address the expected increase in demand for hotel services in the Asia-Pacific.

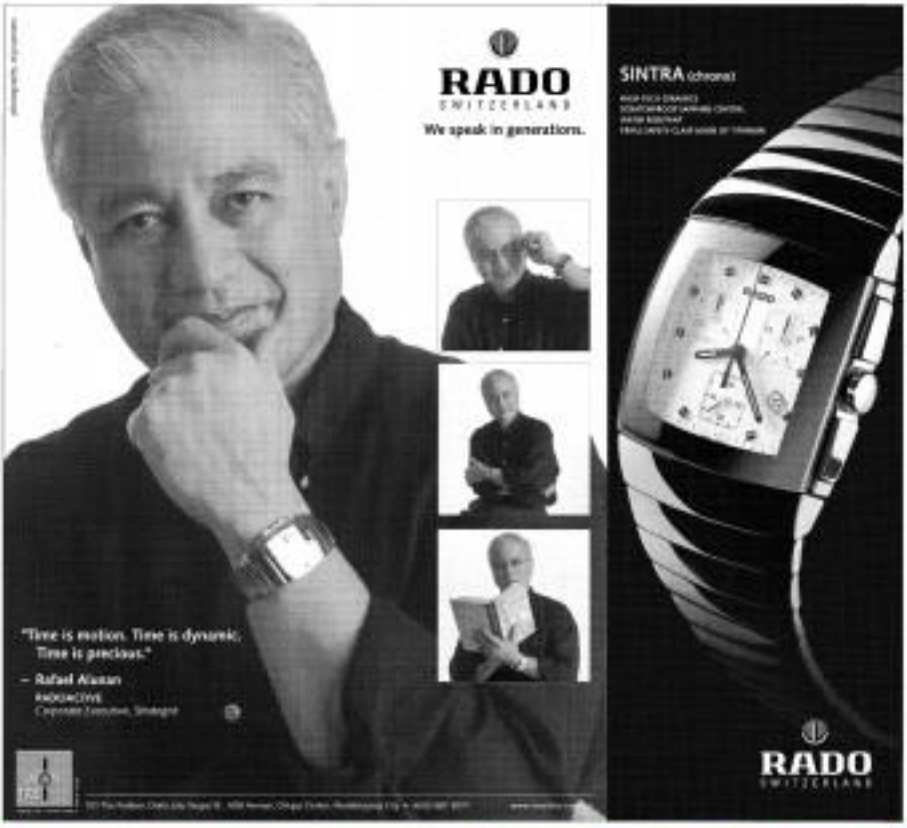
"Tourism in different parts of the world is increasing," he said during the launching of the Manila Customer Service Center Tuesday. "2004 should be the best year since 2000."

Imbardelli noted that the demand for leisure and resort hotels has been steadily growing in the Asia-Pacific.

Occupancy rate in the region stands at 75 percent, he said.

IHG expects demand to grow this year in most parts of Asia, including the Philippines, he added.

According to IHG chief executive Richard Smith, the Philippines would continue to expect



Discharged card

IT looks like Bankard has stumbled on to its biggest collection case ever. The Technopro is now mum at least P400 million for lapsed-off and refunded from the purchase price they paid Equitable PCIBank to gain control of the credit card company in 2000.

Well, a SEC-bar-ligetical.

The Tuchengcos, through BOBC Capital, acquired 67 percent of the publicly listed credit card company on Jan. 20, 2000 for "3.925 times the 2999 book value." Later, EPCIB disclosed that it had received P600.1 million, net of taxes, from the Bankard sale.

Still, despite the sale supposedly being an "as is, where is" lot on and BOBC heralding the acquisition as its deal of the year, the Technopro are now dickering with various buyers' remorse.

According to the grapevine, BOBC had belatedly discovered some bad bookkeeping within the Bankard unit. Subtleties within the deal's closing file include your choice price.

An indication of the magnitude of Bankard's financial woes is that within the first year of the acquisition, the new owners wrote off nearly P522.5 million in credit card re-collectibles. The following year, Bankard wrote off an even greater P698.7 million in losses.

In addition, Bankard had to provide nearly P371 million allowance for probable losses for 2001 and 2002.

According to the grapevine, the belated discovery of the bad collectibles was the reason Bankard let go this last year of MIV in its telephone mailbox, crippling them with, as if to quite the numbers-crunchers, HIV-breakaway from Pamangbayan and Ayuyao. Officially Bankard said the replacement was to comply with the BSP requirement to change symbol numbers every so often.

Still, the Technopros may have a uphill battle to prove Bankard's alleged hidden losses. In six months after they acquired the credit card company, the Tuchengcos merged the BOBC credit card portfolio with Bankard, with Bankard posting paltry BOBC P443.9 million for the merger.

Despite the merger and Bankard losing 78 officers and staff of the BOBC credit card division, the enlarged Bankard saw its net income sink from P1.25 million in 2000 down to P115.7 million in 2001 and P63.9 million in 2002.

For the third quarter of 2003, Bankard reported P61.84 million in net income after writing off to-tubes P171 million in losses.

According to the grapevine, Bankard president Jesus Reyes has already instructed BOBC of the Tuchengco-demand and their decision is reportedly softened the refund issue rather than dragging it out right over in the courts.

GSIS' cow grazes

THE SOUR, Security System may be selling out of Equitable PCIBank but the Government Service Insurance System is salivating to make within the bank before the selling is of tokens down to.

GSIS disclosed yesterday that it had acquired 2,200,000 shares of EPCIB for month. Strangely, GSIS owner ever permitted for corporate finance Richard Medrano and vice president for treasury Consuelo Manansala failed to disclose their sweetage acquisition was per share in their disclosure.

At its assumed average of P41 per share, GSIS' purchase price plus commission and taxes for the added shares would have topped P91.5 million.

The save-leaving spree of GSIS per in total EPCIB holdings at 51,626,233 shares as of end-January about 43.5 percent of the SSS' end-2003 total shareholding of 187.8 million shares.

Combined, the SSS and GSIS shareholdings effectively translate into 41.6 percent control of the telecom tar-get bank.

The broker reporting in having accumulated the new EPCIB shares, 4,006,575 shares alone in January 2004, and a single share sold, happens to be from Resources of Global Technology.

While Technopro was buying his quota BOBC Securities (whose nominee, Ms. Alicia Arroyo, aka Mrs. Jose Pidal) was accidentally on the other side of the fence, selling 22,639 shares.

Bhaskar Bezzidler of Richland Inc. ley Orbus Bank, Universal Motors owners) was a the second at 500,000 shares bought, and also not a single share sold.

Heard through the grapevine

MATEO of (arresting the Gloria's) politics in Equitable PCIBank amid a takeover attempt, EPCIB director Frank Gothic solely sold 22,350 bank shares to unknown party/parties.

EPCIB president/CEO Antonio Do offered no explanation for his elder brother's action.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or mchicko_pdi@hotmail.com.)

COCKTALES

Victor C. Aquatin

Political stability to boost RP edge in call centers

By Abigail L. Ho

THE FUTURE deregulation of the telecommunications industry and an improvement in political stability will help boost the Philippines' chances of competing with India and China in the call center and business process outsourcing (BPO) business.

Lance Mors, vice president and Philippine country head of telecommunications technology firm Intel, BEA Group Asia Pacific, said the country can "well on its way to becoming a real force to reckon with in the outsourcing industry but certain concerns need to be addressed."

He related that with 65 percent of the continuing market under its belt, India was perceived as a market leader.

"With an ever vampire India? He, because India has scale and the Philippines does not. We just have to show that the Philippines is a high-quality service provider," he said during a presentation at the 4th e-Services Conference and Exhibit yesterday.

He echoed that while the Philippines' telecommunications infrastructure was among the best in Asia, a further deregulation could help make the country more attractive to outsourcers.

In another forum, Asian Wall Street Journal editor Reginald Chua said the Philippines had the potential to be a real giant in the outsourcing industry if it could only have "regulatory stability, good marketing and promotion."

He cited as the country's biggest problems continuing regulatory calls that were made in the past, instability factor by the threat of coup d'etats and uprisings, the huge budget deficit and recent Supreme Court decisions concerning big business.

These include the nullification of the government's contract with the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. Inc. for the construction and operation of the Phase IB terminal 3.

But Chua did say that the Philippines could continue to take advantage of its pool of high-level workforce.

5 petroleum exploration projects slated for '04

By Reuvef M. Daniego

AT LEAST five petroleum exploration wells are expected to be drilled while five more service contracts are expected to be awarded in 2004, according to a Department of Energy official.

Energy Secretary Eduardo V. Mañalac said in an interview that two or three wells were slated for drilling in deep waters while two others would be drilled onshore.

He said drilling works would be done in Northwest Palawan, Sulu Sea, offshore Bicolano and Cotobato.

Also, Mañalac said four service contracts covering the Manila Bay-West Central Luzon block and the Cagayan basin were in the advance stage of negotiations and could be awarded within this year.

The Manila Bay-West Central Luzon exploration block covers 480,000 hectares. Industry data show that two main prospects in the area were known to hold at least 700 billion cubic feet of natural gas in a third of the Malampaya reserve in Northwest of Palawan.

Experts say the peninsula of the Manila Bay block to a developing gas market and the challenges of the water means a relatively easy development of any discovery in the area.

Industrial businesses and the end-consumers sector are expected to emerge in Southern Luzon, Manila and adjacent provinces, when a planned 300-kilometer pipeline would deliver gas from a processing plant in Batangas to Isarog in Pandanguer City.

Petroleum workers are looking for natural gas reserves in the Cagayan sub-concession.

Mañalac told winning bidders in the First Bevolution Contracting Round or FOR 1—which would be held next month—were required to start their drilling programs in 2005 or 2006.

Under FCR 1, the government is putting in auction service contracts for 46 of the country's coast-spanning exploration blocks.

Since last month, Mañalac said the government would bid out contracts on geothermal exploration sites FCR-2.

He said there were 10 geothermal exploration blocks available.

"We do not have a complete national inventory of geothermal resources like what we have on petroleum, but we have enough data to be able to do a competitive bidding round," he said.

Spending our taxes wisely

By Dominic M. Dybuco

LAST Friday, Feb. 6, because of the deadlock between the Senate and the House of Representatives, the media reported that we would get the remaining 2003 Medicaid Budget for 2004. While this is true, the 2004 budget level is higher than that of 2003. That is because of the P43-billion increase in debt service, resulting in a 2004 budget of P852 billion.

Dubbed austerity, less than 10 percent of this will be for capital outlays. Some P250-billion is for personnel services, P225 billion for maintenance and operating expenses and P272 billion for debt service. Only P80 billion, or even less than one-third of our debt service, will be left for capital outlays such as roads, school buildings, and irrigation structures.

COMMENTARY

Political expediency

In view of this right budget, it is critical that the government spends our taxes wisely. However, some issues in the government can stem for political expediency than our people's welfare.

For example, in rural areas, land is distributed to farmers in the government can promise that it distributed a large number of hectares to poor farmers. But, in many cases, without the accompanying support services such as roads, technology and marketing arrangements, which the farmer landlord used to provide, the farmer is worse off than before.

Instead of the government investing in services and providing these farmers with support services, it often gives little emphasis to these plights. If promises catch their farming woes fast, without a guarantee of the necessary accompanying support services that have many farmers more destitute than ever.

The same holds true for farm to market roads. The government promises the construction of farm to market roads every year. But all too often, these farm to market roads deteriorate rapidly because of substandard specifications. This leaves the farmer with unusable roads and the taxpayers' money wasted, again because of political expediency.

Irrigation

In irrigation, there have been significant improvements. The National Irrigation Administration (NIA), largely under the leadership of Administrator Arturo Pacio, has performed very well in the last three years. From 2001 to 2003, a yearly average of 23,326 hectares has been upgraded to be new irrigation. This is 39 percent better than the 1998 to 2000 performance. For rehabilitated hectares, the NIA yearly average has been 146,000 hectares, 56 percent better than the previous years. (Note that the number of rehabilitated hectares is more than eight times that of the new irrigated hectares, despite the much smaller budget given to rehabilitation.)

Despite this good performance, NIA could have done even better if it had not been subjected to political pressures. Similar to land reform where lands are distributed often without support services and there is another multi-million-peso project with unresolved operations, political expediency has been a detrimental factor in determining irrigation budget allocations in the past.

Today, according to a top NIA official, out of our 1.5 million irrigated hectares, only 400,000 are operational. Again, according to this official, this 400,000 operationally irrigated hectare level has remained at the same level for the last 30 years. This is because of the politically expedient bias for building new irrigation systems rather than rehabilitating existing ones. Thus, while almost half of our irrigated hectares remain non-operational, we continue to give priority to building new irrigation systems.

Cost/benefit

Administrator Pacio says that if he is given P80-billion more he repair and rehabilitate, or he can make operational an additional 75,000 hectares. He will spread an average of only P250,000 per hectare for this. In comparison, 3 new hectares P220,000 and P600,000 per hectare to open up a national irrigation system. Also, in other words, for the same amount of money, you can more than 2 hectares at an average if you rehabilitate an existing irrigation system rather than build a new one.

In recent years, there has been an improvement in the budget allocation for repair and rehabilitation. In 2003, this amounted to 33 percent of the NIA budget. Without political pressures, this would and should have been greater.

How irrigation

If more irrigation should be constructed, the best use of taxpayers' money and the greatest benefit to the farmers should dictate where

(CONTINUED) 10

IRRIGATION TYPE	JAPAN	INDONESIA DISTRIBUTION	[illegible]
Shallow Tube Wells	77 %	0 %	P 0.0 B
Communal	14 %	11 %	P 0.0 B
Technical Irrigation System (TIS)	8 %	38%	P 17 B

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Organic farming: Venture with a conscience

By Maurice Malanes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

(Last of a series)

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—It's Baguio, the country's salad bowl, the likes of organic farming received fearsome flinches not once.

"Many researching a chemical farm into an organic farm takes at least three to five years; many farmers fear the scenario of not being able to pay their previous loans," she says.

Many farmers in Baguio and other vegetable districts in Benguet often obtain a loan from financiers, mostly agro-chemical dealers, for their fertilizers and pesticides.

Barring unfortunate events such as disasters, pests and low prices, a farmer can immediately pay his loans after a good harvest.

But if one or more of these factors are present, the farmer has to bargain with his creditor to pay the loan after the next harvest.

Many farmers thus fear going organic because they worry that they cannot pay their previous loans while their farms are being converted, says Ramos. Another fear is the intensive labor involved in organic farming.

Bester says many farmers have been used to buying instant fertilizers and other inputs so they would find it a waste of time to be making compost, for example.

But such fears may belong to a person ahead of his own shadow.

FEATURE

Freedom

Still unknown to many farmers, organic or biodynamic farming, as practitioners Greg Elizes of Baguio City calls it, actually frees farmers from their debt chains.

Cultivating a 3,000-square-meter biodynamic farm, Elizes has not only freed himself from middlemen who, every without lifting a finger, make a killing out of the multimillion vegetable industry.

Each week Elizes, who has been engaged in biodynamic farming since 1993, sells his produce to families in Metro Manila and regular customers in Baguio City.

Except for occasional loans from a credit cooperative, Elizes has freed himself from the shackles of debt from financiers and banks.

He has earned the trust and loyalty of his clients so much so that some of them would volunteer to lend him money in times of need. He repays whatever he borrows in kind—through his produce—without, if not with very minimal, interest.

In 2001, two clients sponsored Elizes's round-trip ticket to Australia where he underwent advanced training in biodynamic farming under the tutelage of Alex Podolinsky.

Predictably, now 51, a farmer and scientist who first advocated and practiced biodynamic farming in Australia, he and the Australian farmers he trained are now studying not only organic vegetables but also organic or free-range livestock and poultry.

Why were clients supportive of Elizes's advanced training on biodynamic farming in Australia?

"This is because [as owners, they also benefit] in terms of the high nutritious quality of food I [also] bring them," says Elizes.

The arrangement Elizes has evolved with his clients is what he calls "community or client-supported agriculture." It can also be called community or client-supported economy.

Under this setup, clients are also willing to help Elizes during unfortunate disasters such as when a nearby creek swelled during a typhoon and silted part of his farm.

"So as far as [cash go, I'm worry-free," he says.

Elizes's farm also requires no input, except for a truckload of horse manure he occasionally buys from horse owners in Baguio's Wright Park.

But he intends to buy four cows, which can produce enough dung for his compost.

He also produces half of his seed supply, and intends to be totally self-sufficient in seeds in the time.

Organic restaurant

In Lamtang, Irisan village, 8 km west of Baguio City's downtown, Bro. "Eve's Garden," an organic food house that seeks to help customers "experience health in their meal."

There's one thing unique about this food house. Clients have to make advance reservations as the 13 varieties of lettuce, which make up the vegetable salad dish, are harvested and prepared at the right time. This is to ensure that clients get all the trace elements from the organically grown vegetables.

Dr. Evelyn Bonita, a retired doctor and an authority on alternative nutrition medicine, manages Eve's Garden as she knows how to ensure her clients' health and nutrition for their money's worth.

Just below the food house is the organic farm of Ayalin's brother, Andrew, who raises not only 13 varieties of organic lettuce and some leeks, parsley and celery, but also herbs such as basil, mint and oregano.

Besides providing Eve's Garden's vegetable salad, the organic farm also supplies organic vegetables to other clients, which include hotels and some local families.

The lantern-style Asian compound is a thriving testimony of a farming system and restaurant business that focus on the health and nutrition of clients.

From Elizes's and the Ayalin's experiences, the message is clear: another healthier and gentler farming and business system—different from that, which is beholden to agro-chemical firms, financiers and big-time traders—is possible.

SPREE: Elizes hauling compost made of decayed horse dung, weeds and grass.

RELENDING PROGRAM

JBIC set to grant ₱5-B soft loan to Quedancor

By Christine A. Gupilan

THE JAPAN Bank for International Cooperation is set to provide a P5-billion loan to the Quedancor Rural Credit and Guarantee Corp. (Quedancor), which would be used for relending in the rural sector.

The Japanese lending agency is now in the final stage of discussions with Quedancor and the National Economic and Development Authority's Investment Coordinating Committee over the terms of the loan.

"Relending ourselves of this loan with its soft terms will allow us to charge affordable interest on farmers' loans," said Quedancor president Nelson Buenaflor from his office yesterday.

Aside from the JBIC, Quedancor expects to get fresh funds from commercial banks. These include the Allied Banking Corp., Philippine Associated Bank, United Coconut Planters Bank and the Land Bank of the Philippines.

These banks lent to Quedancor by committing with the agri-agra law.

The law requires banks to set aside a portion of their loan portfolio to agricultural and agrarian reform projects.

"These participating banks bought the debt papers of our farmers-clients and this could pave to compliance for the required loan portfolio to be invested in agriculture and agrarian reform-related projects," explained Buenaflor.

P50 recently-opened a P150-million credit window to Quedancor, increasing its exposure to the state-run facility to P300 million.

Quedancor will offer these funds as loans to finance livelihood programs of government employees, small farmers, fisherfolk, local retailers and rural and agri-tech businesses.

Quedancor chalked up a net income of P50 million last year, double the previous year's P25 million.

The state-run agency's earnings grew due to its 99-percent collection efficiency and increased funds from commercial banks.

Buenaflor reported that Quedancor's total lending portfolio stood at P2.7 billion as of December last year, short of the original lending target of P3.7 billion.

"We came short of target because we were not able to receive the awarded funds from the Bureau of Treasury through the Agriculture Competitiveness Enhancement Fund," said Buenaflor.

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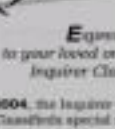

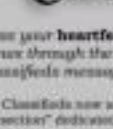

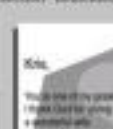

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More automotive firms set to export CBUs

By Michelle V. Remo

BMW PHILIPPINES and Mitsubishi Motors Corp. are reportedly set to begin exporting completely built-up units within the year, boosting the dollar-generating capacity of the country's auto industry.

With this development, the Philippines will have three car firms engaged in export.

Currently, only Ford Motor Co. Philippines is exporting CBUs.

Without revealing the car firms, Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima on Wednesday announced the export plans of the two manufacturers.

Sources in the automotive industry confirmed that the car companies involved are Mitsubishi and BMW.

The decision of Mitsubishi and BMW to export vehicles assembled in the Philippines came after the government granted export incentives to CBU manufacturers last year.

The incentives grant is part of the government's Motor Vehicle Development Program (MVDP).

The program is aimed at turning the Philippines into one of Southeast Asia's major exporters of CBUs.

The MVDP is expected to increase the country's annual CBU sales to 300,000 units within three to five years.

Last year, the automotive industry sold 92,000 units in the local market—9 percent higher than its 2002 domestic sales.

Ford's CBU exports reached 21,000.

Aside from the export incentive grant, the rationalization of the excise tax law last year also pushed the development agenda of the auto industry, according to industry members.

The shift in the basis of the excise tax—from engine to price—resulted in lower prices for most passenger and commercial vehicles.

The additional CBU exports of Mitsubishi and BMW are expected to help the country attain its goal of exporting 25,000 vehicles this year and at least 50,000 units beginning 2006.

Ford is planning to increase exports to 16,000 CBUs this year.

According to Undersecretary Gregory Domingo, the improved business environment in the country, brought about by the MVDP, is expected to entice more car manufacturers to engage in export.

JOSE RIZAL MEMORIAL STATE UNIVERSITY
Las Casas, Philippines
Tel. & Fax No. (65-213) 4444-0000

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND SUBMIT PROJECT PROPOSAL

The Jose Rizal Memorial State University, (JRMSU) Tampilisan campus, commences pre-qualification procurement, short-listing, bidding, post-qualification, contract award and implementation of the following project proposals for the Construction/Purchase/Installation of the Multi-Purpose Building, Water Supply System and Electrification Project (MPBWSSEP) at the Tampilisan Extensional Campus, Tampilisan, Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines, Lot Area: 5 hectares, Building Area: 1,000 sq. m., Water Supply System and Electrification, Project Cost: P15,000,000.00, Source of Fund: Locally-Sourced Internally Generated Revenue (LSIGR), Implementation Period: 180 calendar days, Project Duration: January to June 2004, Project Description: Construction of Multi-Purpose Building, Water Supply System and Electrification, Project Location: Tampilisan, Jose Rizal Memorial State University, Tampilisan Extensional Campus, Tampilisan, Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines, Project Scope: Construction of Multi-Purpose Building,

PSE nears completion of sale of another block of shares

By Abigail L. Ho

SETTLE accepting the subscription of five institutional investors to 5.2 million new shares on Wednesday, the Philippine Stock Exchange is expecting to complete in the next two to three days the sale of another chunk of shares to foreign investors.

The bourse, however, has yet to decide whether to issue new shares for the prospective sale. The sale will involve 520,750 to 867,171 shares, SEB King Ting Capital Partners Inc. president and chief executive Manuel Tordesillas said in a news briefing yesterday.

Tordesillas said the sale of this block of shares was expected to fetch around P130 million for the bourseowner.

Tordesillas said SEB King Ting, serving as underwriter for the exchange, was currently in discussions with United States and London-based investors for the sale of the share block.

PSE chair Alicia Ritos-Arroyo said the deal was on the verge of closing. This would most likely happen "in two to three days."

Those yet-to-be-sold shares represent the remaining 5.6 percent of PSE common shares that would have to be sold to non-brokers for the exchange to fully comply with the terms of its demutualization.

According to a Securities and Exchange Commission directive, brokers of the PSE should comply with the ownership cap for exchanges under the Securities Regulation Code (SRC).

Under the SRC, institutional investors like brokers and financial institutions can own up to only 20 percent of the local bourse, while individual investors can own up to only 5 percent.

Telling that mandate into consideration, the local bourse has to sell 40 percent of its total outstanding shares to non-brokers.

TORDESILLAS

So far, Ritos-Arroyo said, was a "substantial compliance" with the SRC, paving the way for the PSE's full demutualization.

"The said requirement is 30 percent, but we'll be doing it in phases, so the number improves. The 40 percent is already substantial compliance. Hopefully, there'll be better cooperation with the SEC so this will promote the stability of the exchange," she said.

Spending our taxes wisely

Continued from B1

the budget allocation page.

On Page B4 is a table using data provided on UP-Los Baños' MS. Bella Dewil's recently released book "Inverting the Water Crisis in Agriculture". She remarked that the situation is "very alarming."[3] Into the average monsoon harvest [illegible] of rice (USRI) of the different irrigation systems. We have compared this with the 2004 NIA budget allocation of P4.7 billion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the direction is clear: Taxpayers' money is wisely used by allocating more for rehabilitation than new construction. The 35 percent budget share for rehabilitation should be very significantly increased.

For new construction, shallow tube wells have an ERR almost 10 times that of NIA. Its share is only one-eighth that of NIA. The budget share of shallow tube wells should likewise significantly increase while that of the NIA should decrease.

We should support Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo, Administrator Horan and the good political forces in overcoming the bad forces that have political support. Everyone farmer welfare. There we can be assured that with an estimated eight [illegible] national budget, where over less than 10 per cent can be used for essential support outlays, the government will finally spend our taxes wisely.

[The author is chair of Agrisafe, a private sector initiative former Undersecretary of Agriculture and Trade and Industry, and former Chair and Cabinet Secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrisafe@pldtdsl.net or info@agrisafe.org.ph]

Intercon group . . .

Continued from page B4

year growth in tourism, despite the volatile political climate brought on by the coming elections.

"We believe in the economic stability of the Philippines," Nacorda said. "We won't invest in a country if we don't believe it can provide good opportunities for business."

"We have been here for 35 years and we are here to stay," he added. He said. "We will continue to contribute to the development of the local industry."

The group's portfolio in the Philippines includes the Intercontinental Manila in Makati City, Holiday Inn Galleria in Ortigas, and Holiday Inn Clarkfield in Pampanga.

Another hotel, the Cocos Plaza Galleria, is scheduled to open in 2005.

Home LIFESTYLE

The violent bear Valentine's away

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

On the day of romance, let's open a can of worms, like pretty babes of Manila's chi-chi set being beaten up by their boyfriends

MY FRIEND had a hideout-at-our-tale which I chose to believe. One late night he was walking back to his resort cottage when he heard some noise. He craned his neck, cocked his ears and opened wide his eyes, in the next cottage was this hunk of a guy throwing stuff, including the lamp, at his girl, and he began to beat her up. What my friend found hard to believe wasn't so much the battering as the face that they were a cool couple in Manila's chi-chi set.

As that episode was narrated to the office, my staff said they weren't surprised at all because—and this was what I found hard to believe. One believed anyway again!—they also know of many other "cool couples" where the guys, hunks even, lay their hands on their girls' souls, who are themselves among Manila's hot babes. How could young couples, coated in beautiful pairs, keep such dark secrets beneath their lifestyle of glamour and glitz?

Blotlis have tackled domestic violence regularly among the marginalized social classes but hardly if at all among the fo-lited socially visible set.

Battering doesn't go with Prada and Jimmy Choo, right? Wrong.

You'd think sophisticated, glamorous and seemingly well-to-do women—the type who persistently grace society and style pages—would know better than to bear soulmate in a relationship. Apparently not.

This may seem like a fool-trap topic, a diversion. So Taboo as, in the panic that she's pushed to the edge. She reaches the edge and doesn't need a nudge to fall off that cliff.

I've seen women, otherwise stylish and poised in their careers, suffer nervous breakdowns after a breakup. Who hasn't seen one or heard down through ears, at least a near literal-

The violent bear Valentine's away

Homepage A1

down!

I've come across girls who couldn't fathom (wank, than it) because they were breaking up with their boyfriends. I'm sure it came to them these days when they say it's hard to find a guy—the guy-girl ratio isn't good—and harder still to keep one, with cutthroat competition out there. Plan have your sweet, the new girl faces her bootie. So much for a good night.)

They say single girls have it tougher now than in my time when the biggest problem was how to circumvent the curfew.

What do I end up telling these girls who have just lost their boyfriends or who don't have dates on Valentine (yeah, right, the day is only a commercial pitch for the malls and restos)? Go to the gym. Do yoga.

That's not a joke. Exercise is supposed to release "happy" hormones which lift you from depression. But more than that it develops your character—in yourself. It's one of the ways to pamper yourself, and self-pampering is a girl's best friend—next to a hilarious wine gay. Okay now to shopping.

I've noticed that girls who nurture interests other than lugging a guy are those most likely to survive ill-fated relationships. These must be interests and obsessions beyond your work and career, way beyond your family and boyfriends.

For also counsel that girls or women who can thrive on being alone are those who love to read. Women who can snuggle down in a good book are those who aren't afraid to be alone (in fact, they cherish solitude when their mind can wander and be enriched. The time means stimulated minds, and a stimulating mind is sexy (yes, after you flash your navel).

Relationships yield dependence on the other. That's both an upside and downside. Battered women can't leave a relationship because they've become too dependent on it. It takes a sense of self-empowerment to want to leave a violent or uncanny relationship, but it's a gradual process. You must first realize that you deserve more than crumbs, that you deserve respect, honesty and integrity from the other.

A relationship, if it is to work, must enhance you, and the other. It must make you feel beautiful, even if you're not, and feel great about yourself—even if you keep tripping on your stilettos. A guy, if he's worth fighting for, must nurture you—not your silly stress. Otherwise, you should not take any whacking from him.

Having said that, I repeat what I always tell my students who come to me after their prince turns into a frog. You will live. Nobody dies of a broken heart—unless you're below 95 years old.

So go, girl!

Vogue editors visit

While almost everyone is in collective self-flagellation over publishers, there are those who continue to make a pitch for what's good and marketable about the country. Philippine's director of public relations Shannon Gutierrez had dinner with Australian journalists who, he said, not only loved their stay here but also went away impressed with the creativity they had seen.

They were Leigh Sacchiw, deputy editor of Vogue Australia; Linda Smith, executive editor of Marie Claire; James McNeil, editor of Australian Magazine; and Clare Barker, writer for Harper's Bazaar.

He last part Jeannie Goulbourn also hosted a cozy get-together for her longtime friend, Marie Christine Marsh, who hosts the leading fashion TV show in Europe. The French broadcast journalist, who's based in Paris, is a regular visitor to the country because she loves scuba diving. Over dinner with Gina Lopez, French Ambassador Pierre Morrer, Bourcaya Affairs Secretary Delia Albert, Marie brought up the possibility of staging a design project showcasing abaca. She believes the native fiber has immense possibilities.

That's a good idea coming from a seasoned fashion journalist who's long associated with such fashion giants as Karl Lagerfeld and Calvin Klein.

E-mail the author at cmanzano@philstar.net

Events place sets love date amid tropicana

THE GAZEBO Royale will feature an acoustic band and a string ensemble for Valentine's Day. Leading caterers such as An Feanor Estates, Better Fun Catering Services, Gener Chefs Til-Chefs Food Corp., Hizon's Catering, Ala Filipinas and the Manila Catering will provide food.

The Valentine dinner will be set amidst elegantly landscaped tropical paradise gardens of Gazebo Royale's Champagne and Phoenix Pavilions, filled with palms, corals, flowering trees and bushes, man-made lakes, fountains, brooks and waterfalls.

The garden setting was designed by landscape artist Payang Lyd and executed by Ruth Gardens Inc.

Gazebo Royale is located at 29 Hanyes Ave. Ext., Quezon City. It is suited to wedding receptions as it is near such churches as Our Lady of Consolation and San Lorenzo Ruiz in Tandang Sora; San Nicolas de Tolentino and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Project 6; Immaculate Heart of Mary in UP Village, Diliman; Heart of Jesus and Mary and St. Peter Parish in West Triangle.

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GAZEBO Royale: two amid the greens

Trend Spotting LIFESTYLE

Sweeping for treasure

JACKIE O.'s triple-strand cultured pearl necklace by Kenneth J. Lane—sold for 400 times its estimate at the auction of the former US first lady's estate. Behind the necklace: jewelry worn during previous presidencies from Pat Cleef and Arpels and Harry Winston

Who says you can't sell your jewelry and other cherished pieces through an international auction house like Sotheby's?

By Kitty Go
Contributor

DID you ever wonder how much you could get for that ruby and diamond necklace which you last wore in 1974? Or when was the last time you got married and wore a tiara that now sits on its own throne—in the bank vault?

Aside from taking those pieces to your friendly neighborhood jeweler who will buy it for a low price or trouble it into something else, you could sell your pieces through an auction house where, in just a simply, your piece will be sold at an international open auction for what the current market or collector think it is worth.

Getting swept in

Twice a year, specialists from auction houses travel to key cities to appraise and catalogue pieces that are presented auction material.

This activity is called a "sweep." But is, "sweeping consignments into an auction," Quek Chin Yeow, senior director of Jewelry for Sotheby's China and Southeast Asia is emphasizing such a sweep in Manila from Feb. 11-15.

Because of logistics, organization and printing lead times, people are generally done three months ahead of the sale date. Therefore the February sale is for the end-of-April sale in Hong Kong. That means better start sorting those pieces that had sentiment when you were Carmel Queen of Mardi Gras.

Getting to be part of a sweep is not so difficult as some doing so may think. You can make an appointment with the Sotheby's Philippine representative's office. They will ask you a few questions about the pieces, like what they are made of, how old they are, etc.

Technically, for international sales, a piece must be worth about US$7,000-10,000, but there are exceptions such as signature pieces from fashion jewelry houses or designers like Cartier, Van Cleef, Bulgari, Andrew Grima, David Webb, etc.

Another special case could be provenance, such as the Manuel L. Quezon-Aurora Quezon Sotheby's sold last year which were pieced in the handbook on the Sunday 13 July of April 1996 that included his costume jewelry that sold 400 times the estimate. So if you have a famous relative, real or not sure to find out his/her stories...

Chin Yeow plans to do the Manila sweep himself, but there are some others he hosts a team of specialists in the morning with the consignor (the person looking to sell), engineers and consultants will be discussed (see related piece) each from the appraised value of the goods. The consignor will also be told which auction the pieces can be featured in based on timing, price and period.

Generally pieces made before 1918 go in a special antique jewelry sale in London [smaller contemporary pieces would go into the "Fine Jewelry" sale in Amsterdam while the high value key (some over US$1 million per lot or more) and/or those with provenance.

inquirer.net

Sweeping for treasure

From page C1

nature go into the featured sales such as "Important Jewels" in New York and "Magnificent Jewels" in Hong Kong, St. Moritz and Geneva.

(But if you are, say, the Duchess of Windsor, the Begum Aga Khan, Mona Bismarck, Mrs. Harry Winston, Ava Gardner, Marlene Dietrich or Elton John, you get your own sale, catalogue, public fit and all.)

The energy is the time when the consignor must sell the specialist recovering he knows about the piece that can add value—sources of stones, placement of signatures. If hard to find, history, limited editions, provenance, etc. If the specialist decides that the piece is worth featuring in any of the sales, further discussion will cover the terms of sale, the and catalogue photography and shipping.

Seasons cause there may be repairs, cleaning, remounting, replacement of stones or batteries (for watches) or testing. All these expenses will be shouldered by the consignor, and Sotheby's can send them to international gemology labs on behalf of the consignor.

The recognized labs for grading and quality appraisals are: GIA for diamonds, Gubelin for colored stones or Type IIA diamonds (of superior quality with very little nitrogen).

For what it's worth

To appraise your piece, jewelry specialists go by several key indicators. One is the intrinsic value of the piece, that is, what the stones and metal would be worth based on rarity, size and quality.

Another may be the period and/or signature. Of such pieces, Chin Bone says, "Naturally a signed period piece will be valued higher than an unsigned piece. Signed pieces tend to have better workmanship. However, you can come upon a beautifully designed piece, and collectors will appreciate the workmanship and rarity and it will find its number value or more but."

WALLIS Simpson, the Duchess of Windsor, was photographed by Cecil Beaton wearing her 19.77-carat Columbian emerald engagement ring by Cartier (above in color at right). The Duchess of Windsor sale was a display of some of the best gems in the world and by far the biggest single-owner jewelry sale at $115.9 million.

Fine prices for similar goods and current market trends add to the assessment of any merchandise.

One jewelry specialist told me that since prices at auctions are also determined by market demands and trends, an astute seller will consign goods at a time he thinks his pieces are in fashion. Likewise, an astute buyer would buy at low market prices before a trend hits.

Take, for example, the collection of socialite and philanthropist Jamie Levin which were mostly iconic designs from the '70s and '80s. For decades, gems studded '80s and hard-edged '70s pieces were not popular. However, Sotheby's successfully sold the entire collection in April 2002 just as collectors were warming up to the vintage-designer trend.

Trends vary based on location, therefore sales are organized to suit the individual cities they are held in. Hong Kong collectors are looking for flawless stones in all categories with a growing interest in strong colored fancy diamonds, particularly of the pink and blue variety.

Jadeite is sold only in Hong Kong, while rubies (including star rubies), signed and/or period pieces and the rare gem emeralds are popular worldwide.

To sell or not to sell

Before the sale, specialist and consignor will arrive at a reserve price, which is defined as "a previously agreed value at which the auctioneer will not sell the piece." This, of course, should not be lower than the low estimate. The reserve price is a confidential number even to the auction house staff.

Technically a piece is not sold without a reserve price, but there are cases when items are sold under "no reserve" (clearly marked on the catalogue with an auction sentence icon) at the discretion of the consignor. Unsold goods can be returned to consignors, or offered at later sales or lower prices or at alternative sales in other cities.

Contrary to what many may think that auctions are merely for the very wealthy or for those who never want wealth, they are inexpensive market places that have existed for centuries where budding collectors can learn from consulting specialists and start a collection with inexpensive purchases.

It helps for seasoned collectors to unload a collection to make way for newer and more important pieces. Rather watchers can also assess mentally what their collections are worth. And if you don't like what you bought, you can always sell it again... or auction.

To make appointments for viewings, contact the Sotheby's Philippines representative office at tel. (632) 6866341; fax (632) 6866324 for e-mail to: consultant@sothebys.com.

E-mail the author at Arlene_pal@yahoo.com.

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Consignor expenses

If you are selling goods through auction, you can expect a worldwide captive audience of serious collectors and dealers, international publicity and traveling exhibits.

However, expect the following expenses for these services:

1) Seller premium to be paid to Sotheby's by consignor:

Goods sold for under HK$ 50,000—15% of sale price

Goods sold over HK$ 50,000—10% of sale price

2) Insurance: 1.5% of sale price if sold or 1.5% of estimate if unsold

3) Illustration—HK$ 2,000-5,000 depending on position in catalogue and color of piece

4) Shipping—US$ 100-150 per piece

5) Other expenses: battery or stone replacement, overnighting, boxing

IBP and Katipunan community create new environmental groups

IN THE MIDST of so much life-hardening news about the ways our environment is being abused and disregarded, some reports that two new action groups have been especially created to address those problems. The Office of the Environmental Ombudsman (OEO), the first of its kind, reached Feb. 3 between the Office of the Ombudsman and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP). Named five months ago, the OEO is headed by environmental ombudsman Atty. Gilbert L. Candelaria, director of the Public Assistance Corruption Prevention Office (PACPO).

It will be recalled that last September, the IBP set up an Environmental Law Committee within its ranks with lawyer Antonio Oposa as chair. The committee organized an IBP National Action Team to handle citizens' complaints.

The OEO was created to ordinary citizens would know where to report environmental violations. The agreement to set up the OEO was signed by Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo and IBP president Jose Anselmo Cadiz. It was witnessed by Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Elisea Gozun.

With the OEO in place, the IBP can bring complaints to the office or officials concerned. If the officials do not act on the complaints, the IBP endorses the case to the environmental ombudsman. The OEO may be reached via the Ombudsman's office, tel. 9269032, local 464 (Director Evelyn Baldpati's office) or through IBP's national office (tel. 631-1536) or 631-87 (Oposa's secretary).

If even lawyers find it necessary to act on environmental violations, the problem must be deeper and more rampant than we think.

Technical Working Group

The second organization created to help save the environment is the Technical Working Group (TWG), whose initial task is to study traffic along Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City. The avenue has become controversial in the face of the imminence of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to cut down trees along its service road and create islands to ease traffic congestion.

The Katipunan community—residents, officials and students of educational institutions along that avenue, as well as business affairs and agencies there—finds MMDA's traffic plans most unacceptable. Members of the community argue that, as the primary sector, they must be consulted before any trees are felled. Instead of cutting trees, they want to spend the money for other traffic-easing measures, such as putting up more pedestrian lanes and installing traffic lights at certain intersections.

The TWG is multi-sectoral. It includes representatives of the MMDA, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Quezon City government, schools and subdivisions in the area, additional assistance is given by experts from the University of the Philippines' Center for Transportation Studies.

It would have been a beautiful example, says Dr. Angelina D. Galang, director of Miriam College's Environmental Education and Research Center, if local government and civil society can work together. The hope from their collective expertise could have resulted in plans and counterplan that would work for the good of all.

As it is, even environmentalists and supporters from the Transportation Science Society of the Philippines on the MMDA Traffic Plan for Katipunan seem to have fallen on deaf ears. Maybe the recommendations are too technical, too difficult to accomplish, much easier to cut trees, settle for trees in impossible places.

There has been no meeting of minds, only a clash of ideas. So there are now all sorts of recriminations on Katipunan, one of them the enforcement of K-turns which is causing motorists' ensuing movements often four times the normal to accidents and disasters.

On Feb. 3, we received a copy of a statement by Dr. Galang, issued it seems at the height of the resumption of tree-cutting, where she laments the way "the MMDA has disregarded community sensibilities and efforts [on Katipunan] because, as well as a blindsiding [widened agreement], press-acting in contempt of court." She adds "our officials should not have such flawed values and attitudes regarding environment, responsiveness to civil society and the rule of law."

She concludes: "On Feb. 3, Judge Rhoderic Gonzalez Santos of QC [Regional Trial Court] Branch 93 issued a strongly worded Temporary Restraining Order which stops any further [MMDA] action in Civil Case Concerned Citizens against Widodo has also filed a contempt charge against MMDA. Citizen action is the only way to stop abusive officials."

It seems providential that the IBP and the Katipunan community should organize themselves for the environment, each in its fashion, almost at the same time. We hope that they will be able to work together, for we all have a stake in their crusades.

E-mail the author at dorisg_ink@yahoo.com

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaddiel Nayda

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DENDROBIUM amoenum, from exhibit at Evangelista Cut

58th orchid show opens Feb. 27

THE PHILIPPINE Orchid Society will hold its 58th Annual Orchid and Garden Show Feb. 27-March 8 at the Ondoksan Park, Quezon City Hall Complex.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony that formally opens the show will be held 9 a.m., Feb. 27. Theme of the show is "Orchid Fiesta."

The event includes free daily lectures, 2 p.m. on weekdays, and 9 a.m. 12 noon and 2-5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

The schedule of lectures:

Feb. 27 (Friday), 9 a.m.-12 noon, "Growing Oncidium Orchids," Gemma C. Perfecto; Feb. 28 (Saturday) 9 a.m.-12 noon, "Orchids for Landscaping," Marlene M. Mangliwan and 2-5 p.m. "Growing Phalaenopsis Orchids," Remedios Anely Sarmiento; Feb. 29 (Sunday), 9 a.m.-12 noon, "Starting an Orchid Collection," Norberto S. Serrano and 2-5 p.m., "Philippine Orchid Species," Edith Mel B. Mandaloy; March 1 (Monday), 2-5 p.m., "Orchid Flower Arrangement", Gloria S. Reinoso; March 2 (Tuesday), 2-5 p.m., "Growing Grandiflorum Orchids," Anna Ruth Pantilacion-Conde; March 3 (Wednesday), 2-5 p.m., "Orchid Potting Techniques," Andrea G. Gabunada Jr.; March 4 (Thursday), 2-5 p.m., "Orchid Greenhouse Nursery Design," Raymundo G. Ong; March 5 (Friday), 2-5 p.m., "Growing Aerides Orchids," Mercedita M. Diaz Jr.; March 6 (Saturday), 9 a.m.-12 noon, "Basic and Fringed Dancers of Orchids," Dr. Filomena B. Dagohoy and 2-5 p.m., "Insect Pests of Orchids" by Ms. Marcela M. Barrameda; March 7 (Sunday), 9 a.m.-12 noon, "Dwarf Climbers of Orchids," Dr. Priscilla M. Bawalan and 2-5 p.m., "Successful Approach on Asexual Propagation of Cattleya Orchids," Dionisio Jr. Castel; March 8 (Monday), 2-5 p.m., "Starting an Orchid Business," Rufilia V. Ignacio.

The event is held in cooperation with the Quezon City Government through its Parks Development and Administration Department.

Visit www.philippineorchidsociety.org or call 9334402.

MODEL Raya Manzanilla and young writer Paola Dalisay

SOG in love Ines Delgado and Chokoi Prieto

HOT twosome David Jacob and Vicky Webb

WORKAHOLIC socialite Margie Moral with her mac, Johnny Velasquez

BUSINESSMAN Cesboy Tuason and fashionable wife Deedie Mendoza

LOVERS for 49 years—and counting: Pating Herbosa and Meli Concepcion

Time for people's fancy to turn to love

CHIC pair Steven Valdes and Tess Prieto N

TODAY is my Valentine special and it's all about you, my sweethearts!

Business lesson, weekend Chips, back door romance or the real thing? Well, pulangges, the touch-wonder is upon to end it things with a thoughts of love letters in the sands, fantasies about the shy basketball player turned sophisticated millionaire you'll meet in your college reunion, near sketch on a movie or television producer who has not only to be in search of a talent but may also be looking for love, a night-out or your favorite bar or club where you meet the one, of better nights and making passionate love before the break of dawn.

But wait, haven't I since changed? Yes, but, pulangges, they learn! Today, love and mass come and go faster than...Vino Arpa'll come along, the man I love" as the song goes.

There are two kinds of bold chaos in heaven: to hated on forever finding new things to love in the person we love. The other is based on our pride in being faithful. Alles o pas? no is, di bale!

Slow but sure

They say relationships that grow slowly ultimately have the best chance of survival. Why? Because your brain is in your before your body shifts into motion.

How do some odd couples match it out? Often, it is the most unlikely of times that turns out to be the most successful. Take for example this real, young, high profile society miss notorious for her outrageous name to men.

But disturbed how her romance love affair began. She rang him up, pretended that he wasn't her boss to see her and made the rounds of different hot spots in town. She had the whole thing meticulously planned.

"What happened then?" I asked and she replied, "He asked me what I'd rather have, the whole cake or 20 minutes in bed? He chose the second, and now having a need for H. Valentine's cake, pulangges.

Love's surprise

Our dashing city gentleman connected among the world's sweetest gents, but even the most urbane we, mister may occasionally fall when some dating prompts a can't-pumpkin dazzling bouquet to pledge of legitacie to her homebound boy. Well, that's what makes love so encouraging and challenging, don't you think?

Time to on everyone's mind this month of feasts, with Cupid aiming his love arrows at almost all of us. Take a look at the how the season in its many fascinating forms that even include new hairstyles. A woman's love affair with her hair can be as emotionally charged as her relationship with the man in her life. You are know him, but your hair is yours forever.

Some beautiful examples of St. Valentine's way of blessing our lovers, as naughty Cupid aims his arrow and hits a bull's eye.

The love story of the granddaughter of President Sergio Osmeña, Minnie Osmeña, ex-Jaimes, ex-Cabarrus,

HE'S a widow, she's a widower! It was chemistry at first sight when businessman Joel Uichico and dedicated cultural and heritage advocate Beatrice Zobel Jr. first met.

POWER couple Patrick Jochico and Mady Tanseco

LOVE in full bloom. It's always a Valentine for Bids-ay-wood Josephine del Gallego and husband Eric Reus, CEO of Abs Binds Commercial Bank

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen on Kodak Max

ness penny widow of Carnation billionaire Dwight Murat after 12 years of marriage, a birthday drink for Abbe Lazarus Dots his love-ably safe; Mei Ramos; stunningly attractive and absolutely stylish Celine Lopez, going love a chance...drinks...and ending up being pen friends with those fun fun the realtors-send romance with dashing Portuguese hotel Antonio Garcia!

Five-time lucky

Cameos sending sentimental vapors, sweet and valentine birds, northern point Montreal dad Rosario got hit by Cupid's arrows four times but they fell off. Now St. Valentine seems to have blessed Monsieur as he has found the beautiful Joy Zapanta, and they will renew "to have and to hold, till death do us part" in June of this year.

Yes, pulangges, love has lifetime workout...to mention what marriage is a flicker until it becomes the most dazzling comet in our sparkling galaxy! But remember, pulangges, as my late father, Joseph A. once wrote in a closed poem to my mother Valentine, my words, Mary R.A.: "Come will fly if birds are lightly Love with the if bird or sparkly, Together Light-ly! I love do I know whether I'm telling you, or forcing you?"

"Think about it, pulangges.

Now! here my sweet, my lovey of today! Have the happiest, most loving in-gether-ness on this day, all you sooo-lovey-o

And, dahlings, our king and queen for St. Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, are former Senator Johnny Osmeña and Pimmie Enrile and treat everyone's pulangges, "love you, guess!" (A final, the one of a kind, attraction for Valentine).

On smile people, after all, a day's wasted without laughter. Happy Valentine to you all and may St. Valentine bless you with a world full of love.

AFTER two-and-a-half years, Victor Consunji and Celine Lopez went their separate ways.

CELINE L with her new love, tall and dashing Portuguese businessman Antonio Garcia

SEALED with a kiss. Pierre and Ana Benny

SHOW BIZ lovebirds Rommel Santiago and Claudine Barretto

SHE'S Gemma's Tina Cuenca: "Now has been the biggest love of Emerhate gentleman Luis Lobarca.

RESTAURANT tycoon Hugo's Lisa Ilarde C. and husband Elbert Cuenca

COZSOPHE lovesome Monsour del Rosario and Joy Zapanta, all ready for a June wedding

ENDLESS honeymooners King Reyes and TV newscaster Vicky Morales Reyes

YDP young lawyer Ferdie Hernandez and brilliant Carissa Medina

BIG Rich's first couple Dennis Primero and Joanna Quimas Primero

WELL-KNOWN cardiologist Dr Randy Francisco with Philippine Tatler's Irene Marcial

ULTRA glam Vicky Fernandez with the "Jos of her life," Gov. Jun Zubiri

RUSTAN'S young sweet blogger Jenne with husband Raul dela Merced

LOVEY-DOVEY achievers Joel Ong and Angelique Villareal

Home LIFESTYLE

A ROOM WITH A VIEW. Multifunction furniture such as a sofa bed, maximizes space.

A bit of New York in Mandaluyong

Soho Central is the first residential building in the Edsa Central complex

MASTER BAKING SCHOOL
Professor Boris Gruss
Bread & Cake Courses
(Basic & Advance)
DIABETIC BREAD & CAKES OFFERED
For Reservation & Inquiries
Ph. call Tel. # 635-79[illegible]

Text by Anne B. Jardico's
Photos by Jim Golez Paredes

A LUXURIOUS, 20-hectare sprawl amid lush environs with trendy shops, restaurants, bars and cafés will soon be developed on the Edsa Central, corner Edsa and Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City.

In the heart of this ultra modern community will rise the two-tower, 35-story Soho Central, named after New York's hippest neighborhood. The ultra-efficient community—a joint venture of Greenfield Development Corp. and Shenzhen Investment Group, in charge of marketing by Century Communities Corp.—encompasses fashion and arts will be just a [illegible] away.

But what exactly is the demand for 21st-century urban living and how on striking a balance between work and leisure, the body and mind, and concept makes everything and anything within comfortable reach—and that includes transportation.

"The trend today in metropolitan residential buildings is work and leisure proximities or mixed development," says Formerly Properties Inc.'s (CPI) managing director John Victor S. Ansaldo. CPI is one of the companies behind one of the country's high-end residential buildings, Eastwood East Forbes in The Fort.

Indeed, the Soho Central is planned, designed and developed with urban realities in mind.

Easy access

A walkway will directly connect residents to the Shangri-La Mall and Edsa MRT station, much like the Eastwood West Park buildings are connected to the subway and shopping arcades. The MRT, Ansaldo says, will be the preferred transport of many executives to avoid heavy traffic and the risk of being late for important meetings.

Everything will be within walking distance—whether residents want to shop, eat or work. Accessibility and connectivity are the keywords.

Soho Central alone will feature four levels of retail and commercial es-

Shopwise blasts into the new year with our biggest bang for your buck as we bring you...
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super sweetstakes
m&m's
MILO
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Tide
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It's so easy to win! Simply make the minimum purchase required from participating brand display and make the correct 4 digit combination for a chance to win instant cash. Grab P5 million in cash up for grabs! So c'mon! Shop na sa Shopwise — ang sikat! The sweetest cash win-dfall is just waiting nearest the store!
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ALABANG: Left wing Festival Supermall Filinvest · MAKATI: Corner of Pasong Tamo and Nia Cruz Extension · QUEZON: 100 E. Rodriguez Jr. Avenue, Bagumbayan, QC

LESS CLUTTER would mean more overhead.

CREATIVE storage makes use of vertical spaces.

LUXURIOUS living at affordable prices

A bit of New York in Mandaluyong

From page C1

clubhouses and basement parking slots, with amenities such as first-class health spa and gym facilities, lap pool, landscaped Zen gardens and meditation area, laundry and dry cleaning services, function rooms and business center, and residents' lounge. The building is near schools, churches and the hospital, Medical City.

This is luxury living at reasonable prices. For as low as P5,000 a month, it can be one's dream home. Available are studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units at 35, 40 and 60 sq m, with floor to ceiling panoramic windows.

All units in Soho will have balconies. "We feel it is important," says Antonio. "Condo living, as some people would say, is tighter than normal. The balcony is a way for our residents to connect with the outside world, to get fresh air and not grocery."

Quality life

But an Filipino tends to give up their lawn- and house-quarters for 35 sq m of space?

Space is at a premium in the city, and Antonio says people can readily adapt to this new trend. Besides, he adds, the alternatives are not that appealing. He says a house in the suburbs often means distressing hours stuck in traffic every single day.

Designer Ian Ibañez, Antonio says, "knows the, say, get two studio units and have the wall between them removed.

But even a small unit does not have to look cramped, as Soho's model unit interior designer Ricardo Guerra Jr. proves. Antonio says Guerra used light colors and mobile and multifunction furniture pieces to give an illusion of space.

"The idea is to make use of vertical space since you have a limited horizontal space," Antonio says. For instance, folding chairs hung on one side of the wall to reduce clutter and make the limited space larger than what it really is. By going minimalist, there is less visual overload.

Soho Central model units are available for viewing. Call 6357111 or 6352611 local 125.

E-mail the author at ajcastro@inquirer.com.ph

BATHROOM fixtures are already installed.

ALL units come with kitchen cabinetry.

Décor and accessories sale

PLAY & Display will hold a Bed Side Go promo until Feb. 29. You can get various accessories like cotton beddings, glassware, ceiling lamps, throws, as well as furniture such as fashion sofas, futon beds and wardrobes at half their regular prices.

Special discounts will be given to sofa beds, framed and beveled mirrors, entertainment cabinets, dining chairs, dining tables, center tables, side tables and a lot more. And lots of reduced prices of curtains, pouches, candles, lamps, carpets and ceramic beddings.

Play & Display stores are at 6707 Ayala Avenue, U.N. Quezon Avenue, Quiapo, Robinsons Place Manila, Megamall, SM City North Edsa Wing, Ayala Center and SM City Pampanga.

AMBER (at center) is an interesting wall accent as well as create the illusion of space. Get this and other designs at 35-percent discount at Play & Display.

RED Paper Bird, a sofa and bed in one practical yet stylish furniture piece.

SCOTCH sofa bed, in luscious yellow, has a unique design and drawers for extra storage.